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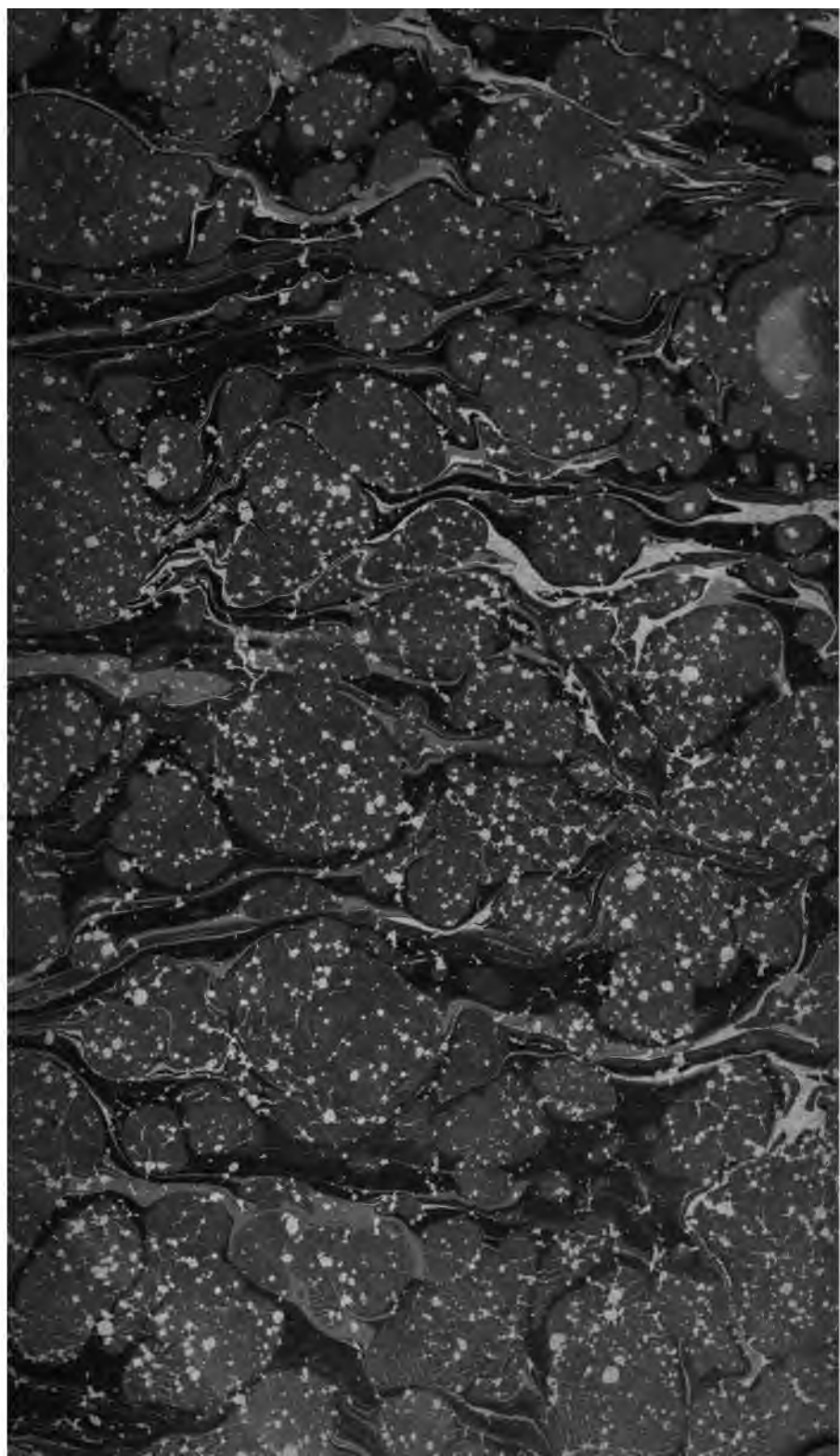
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JUNE 11, 1932

















MEMOIRS  
OF  
MIRABEAU:

BIOGRAPHICAL, LITERARY, AND POLITICAL.

BY HIMSELF,

HIS FATHER, HIS UNCLE, AND HIS ADOPTED CHILD.

VOL. IV.

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## MEMOIRS OF MIRABEAU.

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### BOOK I.

WE must retrograde a little in beginning this second part of Mirabeau's life, in order to give an account of works which belong to his public, notwithstanding the dates which connect them with his private, life. Had we noticed these before, it would have caused too great an interruption in the regular progress of our narrative.

We intend first to notice very briefly Mirabeau's writings during the ten years that preceded the period to which we have brought up our work at the close of the last volume: that is to say, from his banishment to Manosque to the conclusion of the law-suit in Provence. There is great diversity in these writings, some of them being mere sketches, others more finished productions. Some are published, others unpublished. The whole of them are the fruits, more



or less mature, of the immense studies which constituted the pursuit as well as the craving of his whole life, his consolation in captivity, and the source of the vast knowledge he afterwards displayed. It was this knowledge, as profound as it was diversified, that, from the very first public debate in which he took a part, showed him to be deeply skilled in the language of constitutions—a language which those about him could only yet imperfectly lisp. Whilst these latter were just entering the career of reform and political institutions, he had already marked out their course and traced their limits, which perhaps have not yet been reached, even after half a century of experiments.

We stated, in Book IV, vol. II, p. 18, that Mirabeau composed his first work, the “*Essay on Despotism*,” at the end of 1772, during his exile at Manosque\*.

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\* London, 1775. A volume 8vo. of 275 pages, with the following epigraph :

“*Dedimus profectò grande patientiæ documentum ; et sicut vetus ætas vidit quid ultimum in libertate esset, ita nos quid in servitute, adempto per inquisitiones et loquendi audiendique commercio, memoriam quoque ipsam cum voce perdidissemus, si tam in nostrâ potestate esset oblivisci quam tacere.*”—TACIT. VIT. AGRICOL. (We have certainly shown a great example of patience; and as olden times have witnessed the highest degree of freedom, so we have reached the climax of servitude, deprived by informers of the pleasures of speaking and listening; and we should also have lost our memory with our voice, had it been in our power to forget as well as to be silent.)

It is not true, as some have asserted, that the “*Essay on Des-*

This production, according to the author's own account, "was written very rapidly, without plan or order, and rather as the profession of faith of a citizen than as a literary production \*."

He says, elsewhere, that this work "is a too hurried production of youth, containing ideas and principles, but nothing methodical or complete †."

In another letter he mentions it in still severer terms. "I who, at twenty, dared to show myself in print, what did I write? A bad pamphlet containing some truths, and some highly coloured pictures perhaps, which evince a noble and elevated mind, with some fire of intellect; but I repeat, that this book is contemptible, for its contents do not constitute a book: it is a number of shreds and patches united without order, and stamped with all the defects of the period at which it was written. There is neither plan nor form, correctness nor method ‡."

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potism" was written by Mirabeau when only nineteen years old, and during his detention in the island of Rhé. (See M. Barthe's Notice, p. 5; see also "Biographie Nouvelle des Contemporains," by MM. Arnault, Jay, Jouy, &c., vol. xiii. p. 349; also "Essai sur la Vie et les Ouvrages de Mirabeau," par Joseph Mérilhon. Paris, Brissot-Thivars, 1827, p. 7. This error in the latter work is the more remarkable from M. Merilhon being incontestibly the most careful and correct of all Mirabeau's biographers.)

\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to the Dutch bookseller, Mark Michael Rey, dated October 2nd 1776.

† Original Letters from Vincennes, vol. ii. p. 107.

‡ Ibid, p. 444.

No critic has judged the "Essay on Despotism" with such severity as Mirabeau did himself. By a very few quotations, we shall prove a little further on that the praises he bestowed upon it were not more exaggerated than his censure. For the present we shall only notice that just explanation of his boldness in publishing this work, conveyed in the expression "the profession of faith of a citizen," so well justified afterwards—and of his premature debut in a career spontaneously embraced fifteen years before the events which gave it so vast a development. Mirabeau, far from agreeing with his father, "that a man must be out of his senses to write such things when under the action of a *lettre de cachet*," replied to him: "I shall always feel proud of the truly noble and courageous idea of having thundered against despotism at the very time when I was writhing under the inflictions of an arbitrary order." He even did not fear, from his dungeon, to enter into an explanation with the King himself.

"It will perhaps be stated to your Majesty, that from my early youth I have written bold things concerning the government which preceded your reign. But no one will add that I have ever spoken of your own administration but with the respect due to your Majesty; or that I raised my voice only against those maxims upon which your conduct conveys the strongest censure. Neither will they inform you of a fact,—that

the most courageous subjects are always the most essentially submissive."

The "Essay on Despotism" being the earliest of Mirabeau's compositions, is the first sign of his political vocation, and the most singular instance perhaps of a war audaciously declared against despotism by a young man bearing its yoke, and who, although he might have disarmed it, or withdrawn from its inflictions, preferred boldly to strive against it. We would willingly give a detailed account of this production, the recollection of which must soon be effaced, because most probably it will never be reprinted.

Neither are we desirous it should, because we are under no illusion concerning this hasty and rash effusion of an unprepared author, and addressed to a public not much better prepared to read than he was to write it\*. The work is too imperfect; its subject

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\* Mirabeau was thinking perhaps of this work when he wrote, June 22nd 1784, to Chamfort:

"There is a very great difference between knowing that principles are useful, and possessing the art of persuading other men to adopt them. This art requires great preparation, and many auxiliary circumstances. An impatience, even in some degree praiseworthy, drives virtuous men to promulgate truths that strike them, from the very moment that these truths become evident, and without considering whether they appear in the order best calculated to compel the assent of every body. Nothing is more different from the order of the generation of ideas, than their investigation. A science must be already complete before its elements can be laid down. Moral truths must be familiar before they are applied to use. Languages

is treated confusedly and incompletely; there are not divisions in it either marked or perceptible; the propositions are declamatory and diffuse; their discussion is always wanting in method, often in clearness; the style is defective in ease and correctness; it evinces much more of memory than of thought, and abounds in commonplaces, emphatic exaggerations, and especially in repetitions.

Notwithstanding the blemishes in this work, we would willingly give a detailed account of it here; but a long and fruitless study has convinced us that if we would give a plan, we must invent one, and that to analyse must be to re-write it. We may add that the author himself did this, in his "Lettres de Cachet," of which we shall soon have occasion to speak.

We confine ourselves therefore to a brief sketch of the considerations scattered through the volume, separating them from frequent historical digressions, and numberless quotations, the fruits of a remarkable but crude and indigested erudition. To this we shall add such short and rapid extracts as appear to us characteristic.

The author sets out with asking "if man is inclined

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existed during a long series of ages before grammars were written, which have made the study of those languages much easier for us. Books of either morals or politics must dig round and uncover the roots of a prejudice, long before comedy can extirpate it by holding it up to ridicule."—*Letters to Chamfort*, p.15.

to despotism?" The *natural* man perhaps not—the *social* man, yes assuredly. "An inclination to be a despot is as natural to the latter as the hatred of despots is to him whom servitude has not yet perverted\*." This spirit of despotism exists even in republics, as is proved by the Romans all over the world, the British in India, the Dutch in their colonies, Venice, Genoa, and some of the Swiss cantons.

The author next asks, whether social man is good? Yes, notwithstanding what J. J. Rousseau says, "for the social state is the most worthy as it is the most happy result of man's perfectibility†." Yes, for the instinct of sociability gives man a tendency to good, and this he requires, especially to be just. What in fact could be authorised injustice but the dissolution of all society‡? Man cannot be happy without fulfilling this necessary condition of his being; and he will be always just and happy when he is enlightened concerning his real interests, which are always conformable to justice§.

What necessity however is there for discussing this point? "Whether man in a state of nature feels repugnance or not to a state of society, the latter does not the less exist. It is better then to endeavour to enlighten it, than to prove that its existence is wrong ||."

But, "if all men love to rule, they whom society

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\* Page 24 of the edition published in 1775.

† P. 40.

‡ P. 22.

§ P. 23.

|| P. 42.

has raised to the highest rank, must enjoy more keenly the pleasures of authority, and endeavour to extend its limits. Abuse of power therefore does not seem inconceivable: it is as natural as excess of any other passion; and its first aspect is so fascinating, that a man would readily yield to it, if reflection and experience had not pointed out its danger\*.

“This general propensity to encroachment being once admitted to exist, the necessity must soon be felt of opposing the tyranny which constantly threatens us, since each of us has its germ in his heart†.”

But does not the social order, as constituted every where, except in a few republics, expose man, if not to inevitable tyranny, at least to a necessary domination?

Yes, no doubt; but subordination is not slavery.

What, in fact, is slavery? “Is it, as some have said, the alienation of freedom? Such a definition is as dangerous as it is false: for it would constitute the gift of a property in your own person, which gift is impossible. Tell the despot, who pretends that he is born absolute master of the slaves whom he oppresses, and treads under foot according to his will, to appropriate likewise to himself their pleasures and pains, their feelings, their strength, all the faculties, in short, composing the property in their persons, and his answer would perhaps be to send to you the executioner

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\* Page 29 of the edition published in 1775.

† P. 50.

with his axe—the sole argument of tyrants. Let us deplore his blindness and detest his principles, but let us never be persuaded by violence: for it is as disgraceful to be subjugated by violence, as it is odious to exercise it\*.”

If we cannot alienate our own freedom, “still less can we barter away that of our descendants, a right of property in whose persons is not and never can be ours†.

“But it is asserted that social institutions have degenerated from the state of nature, and render men more unhappy. If we embrace this opinion, let us endeavour to discover a remedy, or at least a palliative, for the evils that afflict us. Such a search would be much more agreeable than to satirise men and their communities§.

“Men did not intend, neither ought they to have intended, sacrificing anything by forming themselves into communities; they wished to extend, and it was their duty to extend their enjoyments and the use of their freedom, by mutual assistance and guarantees||; for they required reciprocal protection; it was a real and evident want: for nature is limited in her gifts; she distributes them with an equitable though economical

\* Page 34 of the edition published in 1775.

† Page 36. “It is forgotten that a people could not have devoted themselves, much less their posterity, to misfortune, oppression, tyranny, the caprices of a fool, or the excesses of a madman.”

‡ J. J. Rousseau.

§ P. 42.

|| P. 45.



hand—that is to say, very equally, or nearly so; and were we to calculate the advantages and disadvantages, physical and moral, of each individual, we should find very little difference between man and man\*.”

Hence arises a necessary consequence: “rights and duties form the balance-wheel of the human species. This is not an affected display of morality, but the basis of the calculation of human society†.”

Now, in a state of society, as in a state of nature, “man wishes to be happy; he wishes to enjoy, but peacefully—for tumultuous and troubled enjoyments are not enjoyments at all. We enjoy but little except as the fruit of labour; for the earth we inhabit is a kind mother, but she requires to be solicited‡.”

He who has worked, and in working has acquired, wishes to preserve; this is instinctive: “for instinct tells us that the crop we have sown is ours; that whoever would deprive us of it is wicked, unjust, and an enemy whom we can and ought to resist, restrain, and deprive of the power of injuring us by all means within our reach. Instinct shows us all this, even before social combinations have taught and proved to us, for instance, that he who attacks the property of one individual, by that very act attacks the property of all§.

“But, being too much divided between the cares of

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\* Page 81 of the edition published in 1775.

† P. 82.

‡ P. 95.

§ P. 96.

tillage and of defence, men have placed their property under the safeguard of a single one or of several, invested with a power, which we term *tutelar authority*; that is to say, with a power to preserve order so that the harvest may be reaped in peace; to sound the alarm in the community when it is threatened by an external foe; to unite, in short, the strength of *all* for the advantage of *all* \*.

“ Such is the motive of the subordination rendered to the sovereign authority to which the people have confided their defence and their police †.”

“ Thus man has given himself a chief but not a master ‡.”

“ In well ordained communities, men preserve their natural rights to the full extent, and acquire a greater faculty of using these rights. All that belonged to them in their primitive state still remains; all that was forbidden then is still forbidden; and this *all* amounts to nothing more than keeping and increasing one's own property, and respecting that of others §.”

But has the existence of natural law not been doubted?

\* Page 97 of the edition published in 1775.

† P. 45.

‡ “ The recollection of the progressive ideas which led nations to give themselves an hereditary chief, has been lost by the facility with which man adopted received customs without seeking for their origin or reflecting upon their motives. It seems to be forgotten that the right of sovereignty being solely and inalienably in the people, the sovereign is, and can be, nothing but the first magistrate of the people.”—*Lettres de Cachet*, p. 74.

§ P. 43.

“ For what truths have men not denied?—what errors have they not maintained? I shall only observe that it would be very surprising if, in the immense chain of beings, subjected to distinct, positive, and unchangeable laws, man alone had escaped this part of the will of his Creator, ‘who,’ to use the expression of a man of great genius \*, ‘always obeys that which he has once commanded†.’ ”

Thus, there is a natural law ; and rights and duties must be deduced “ from this law, which is binding upon all, indestructible in spite of raving prejudice, and imprescriptible, whatever contradictions it may encounter in human legislations, all of which are however founded upon it ‡.

“ Nature and human institutions, passions, and legislations have jostled each other; contradictions have been piled up in heaps ; codes have been multiplied, and the knowledge of positive law has become an immense science for polished nations, a study more fatiguing to the memory than to the understanding §.”

But if natural law and positive law do not coincide, is it not the fault of the latter ?

No doubt it is. “ But why are legislations, that first necessity of man, and the plan of which is traced by nature herself, so defective, and less advanced than every other work of the human intellect || ? ,

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\* Cardinal de Retz (*note by Mirabeau*).

† P. 47.

‡ Same page.

§ P. 48.

|| P. 51.

“ Because men are constantly making sacrifices to their imagination, which seduces them more surely, and flatters their self-love more than the slow and calculated progress of cold reason ; because the exercise of this reason, as applied to meditation, is more laborious and less within the reach of most men than the workings of the imagination \* ; because men of profound minds are and will be very rare in every age. Thus, observers are scarcer than men of intellect, because the imagination alone constitutes a man of intellect, whilst genius, enlightened by knowledge, and guided by a sound, strong, and practised reason, is scarcely sufficient to form an observer . . . Pursue this gradation, and perhaps you will not find a single man qualified to be a legislator,—that is to say, to assemble and extend the applications of the natural law †.

“ Thus almost all writers upon, or rather restorers of our laws, have imagined much, but meditated very little. They have worked without striving in concert, because they had no first principle ; and they have contradicted each other, because they wrote without method. They have given a new solution to each new difficulty. The edifice, seated upon a moving sand-bank, has become less solid in proportion as it was raised higher, and law has contradicted law. We owe the greater part of our laws to those dark ages when

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\* Lettres de Cachet, p. 51.

† P. 52.

superstition, ignorance, and the rage for war were contending against each other to gain possession of the human mind. In vain was it attempted to give some uniformity to these shapeless compilations: there was a total absence of principle; and every work of this description must bear upon the most simple, self-evident, and invariable principles. It soon became easy to elude the greater part of an immense code, and to take advantage of the remainder. Thus was despotism served by multiplying the laws, ‘for there is,’ says Montaigne, ‘as much liberty and extent in the interpretation of laws as in their framing;’ so that amid so many interpretations an arbitrary one may be chosen; and every arbitrary wish may find a good reason or pretence in this immense labyrinth\*.”

But our object is not to “sum up in detail every known legislation; our question here is despotism, a history of which we do not purpose to write, though such a work is perhaps the noblest that remains to be written, but one of immense extent and very difficult of execution†. Our sole object is to characterise this despotism, which is the most dreadful scourge that can afflict mankind, for it can attain perfection only by the destruction of humanity, which must struggle without intermission against misfortune and privations, whilst it constantly seeks for happiness, that is to say, liberty.

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\* Lettres de Cachet, p. 55.

† P. 57.

An emperor \* wished that the Roman people had but one head, that he might strike it off at a single blow. This was the wish of a senseless barbarian ; but he sought only the perfection of despotism†.”

It is then to the study, and not to the history of despotism that this work applies : “ for to pursue its progress and develope its manœuvres and tricks, is a very different thing from tracing its ravages and opposing its progress. Many historians could describe the reigns of a Nero and a Caligula ; but Tacitus alone could paint a Tiberius ‡.

It is therefore concerning the follies and crimes of despotism that information must be given.

“ To instruct Kings and their subjects is cutting down despotism by the feet§ : Kings, because it diminishes their power ; citizens, because despotism is an attempt upon the security of all, and their submission to it is merely the effect of ignorance, and of having forgotten their rights||.”

We have already stated that most social institutions exercise a domination or power of subjection.

Let us study its principle, “ for it is with reference to the origin of our country’s laws, to the degree of attachment we owe to them, and to the exertions we ought to make for their maintenance and defence, that we are oftenest mistaken, because we have not studied

\* Caligula.

† P. 57.

† Page 56.

§ P. 59.

|| P. 59.

this duty, the most important of all. Most men disgrace their nature by passive obedience ; others likewise, unable to distinguish the circumstances under which obedience is due to government from those under which it is not due, and when honour itself directs that it shall be refused, confound, according to their own prejudices and impressions, but more especially to their personal interests, servitude with obedience, and firmness with rebellion \*."

Let us therefore examine this domination.

Is it of "divine right," as so many base slaves, so many raving fanatics have written ? Certainly not. No one, in the present times, would venture to maintain such an absurdity, which has melted away before the first flashes of public reason, whose progress it is no longer possible to check.

If this domination is not of divine right, it is of human institution ; and in this case it has an object, and has been conferred upon conditions. Now, what are these conditions, and what is this object ?

"The people whom you command could have entrusted their power to you only for their own benefit, or, what is the same thing, for the maintenance of public safety, both internal and external, and for all the advantages of which they looked forward in creating a tutelary authority. They had the full enjoyment of

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\* Page 70 of the edition published in 1775.

their rights when they instituted you; and you could have obtained nothing from them. by compulsion, because, before they created for you the despotism of force, they were the strongest \*. Men are bound to a government only in proportion as it approaches more or less near to the primitive object of its institution†; for duties are, and can be, only proportionate to rights‡.

“ If the people have made you powerful, they have done so for their own greater good; if they respect and obey you, it is also for their own greater good. Let us speak still more plainly: if they pay you, and that very dearly, too, because they hope you will bring them more than you cost, you are, in a word, their first stipendiary servant, and nothing more§. Let us add, that the nation pay this public officer, not to spare him trouble, but to make him take that of defending the mass of public wealth, and consequently all private property||.”

Here, then, is a mandate.

Here, then, is a salary.

But what are the conditions?

In good logic, “ he who pays has a right to dismiss him who is paid, if the former does not derive, from the voluntary stipend granted to the latter, the advan-

\* Page 82 of the edition published in 1775.

† P. 64.

‡ P. 71.

§ P. 82.

|| P. 100.



tages expected ; that is to say, if the authority created to defend the general property continually encroaches upon this property, and thus commits the most dangerous of crimes against mankind, whose confidence it betrays, which renders the crime still more hateful and more deserving of punishment \*.”

Human society has therefore always a legal right to do itself justice. “ Duty, interest, and honour, command us to resist the arbitrary orders of the monarch, and when there are no other means left of preserving our freedom, to force back from him the power, his abuse of it is calculated to lead to the destruction of that freedom†. A nation can always do itself this justice, because it always ultimately becomes stronger than the tyrant‡, and because there is no despot living who can hope to oppress with impunity twenty millions of men §.”

But, in admitting these severe and palpable truths—in acknowledging that society has the right of dismissing its officer when he becomes faithless and a prevaricator, we must now examine whether matters have reached such a degree that the necessity of chastisement is as real as the right resulting from the original contract is incontestible and sacred.

No doubt the people’s delegates are guilty of infi-

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\* Page 82 of the edition published in 1775.

† P. 274.

‡ P. 102.

§ P. 273.

delity and prevarication, “ because a wish to degrade others is inseparable from the desire to elevate oneself ; because it is impossible that a man, whom a great interest cannot moderate, should not avail himself of his superiority ; and because the passions combined produce tyranny and slavery \*.” No doubt kings have never ceased to conspire secretly against their subjects. “ Every act of despotism is a battle in darkness †.” No doubt all means are acceptable to their selfishness, their ambition, and their cupidity. It is, no doubt, with perverse intentions, and by perverting themselves, that they endeavour to dazzle men’s eyes with pomp and grandeur. They have even dazzled their own eyes, and depraved their own hearts : “ for if the ambition and success of conquerors, if the absolute power of despots can inspire beautiful odes, the forgetfulness of what is due to mankind has converted into ferocious beasts rulers who might otherwise have been estimable by their valour and their military talents ‡.”

One of the most disgraceful wrongs committed by governments is, that they have assiduously laboured for the corruption of morals. They have even employed

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\* Page 38 of the edition published in 1775.

† P. 60.

‡ P. 109. “ What is the noblest and greatest genius if he does not respect the rights of mankind ? Does the unfortunate animal, torn by a ferocious leopard, admire the mottled skin and various tricks of its foe ? He who invented the harrow was more valuable to the world than he who restored the sceptre to Porus.”—*Ibid.*

the fine arts in effecting this, by placing them in the service of a frantic and sacrilegious pride, and diverting them from their religious and philosophical destination\*.

Thus the time comes at length for the party panting

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\* "Most of the governments that ought to protect, encourage, and watch over the arts, degrade them by turning them to base purposes. Far from directing them towards the beautiful, the useful and the praiseworthy, their influence is often used for corrupt objects. The fine arts, in a word, have always been the snares and allurements of despots. The sublime efforts of the human mind will hasten the progress of servitude, by accelerating that of luxury, the introduction of effeminacy, and the decline of good morals. In a word, the corruption produced by the arts is one of the fruits of despotism, and its sharpest weapon.

"Nor is this all. Despotism destroys the arts, after degrading them; for he whose heart is corrupt has seldom an elevated imagination. It was at the period of their return to freedom that the Athenians took so high a flight in every kind of glory. The arts then gave way under the blows of tyranny and fled from Greece, where they had taken such deep root and produced so many fruits and flowers. Their migration completed their corruption. They were welcomed to Rome by a despot, eager to gild the chains with which he was binding a whole people, who, till then, had placed all their glory in conquest and domination. Augustus was the friend of great artists; but he was also their corrupter. They disgraced themselves at his court by the basest flattery. The will of one individual laid down the law to men of genius, as to other citizens."—Pp. 42 and 45 of a pamphlet entitled "The Reader shall give the Title," written by Mirabeau, in 1777, in Holland, and which we shall notice presently. We shall no doubt create some surprise when we state that this little work treats only of MUSIC, and our readers will assuredly think with us that nobody but Mirabeau could, on such a subject, have found occasion to inveigh against despotism.

to claim the fulfilment of the contract, and for the principal to punish his agent for the non-performance of his duties.

But these just reprisals lead to such profound political subversions, that nations generally are in no haste to make use of their rights, but, on the contrary, put up with despotism so long as it is pretty nearly bearable.

There is some danger, then, even in their own interest, in advising them to be patient no longer. But that they may not become impatient, and their sufferings be aggravated beyond measure, “kings must be spoken to; men must dare to instruct them and bring them to natural principles, whence it is very easy to wander, but to the evidence of which it is impossible not to yield when they are properly examined\*.”

It is the more important to enlighten kings “because as they are never talked to except concerning themselves and their pleasures, they know very little of affinities; they have therefore but few ideas†, and a

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\* Page 63 of the edition published in 1775.

† P. 100. Elsewhere Mirabeau says:—“Kings who raise themselves only by things, and whom things instruct badly, because they almost always bend to the monarch’s will, passions, and opinions, would perhaps appear the most stupid of human beings if it were known how little knowledge and how few ideas they generally have. Every rational saying that escapes them is preserved; which is,

mode of thinking and feeling different from that of other men ; which must be the case from their stupid and almost ferocious education \*.

Besides, if princes were put “in a state to perceive the consequences of an arbitrary government—conse-

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assuredly, the best possible proof that such sayings are not very numerous.”—*Essay on Despotism*, p. 228.

\* Page 103. “The nation, which ought to preside over this education, as having the greatest stake in it, not only does not select the tutors of its sovereigns, but almost always sees these tutors selected from the class of courtiers whom it despises, if it does not fear them. What hope can it have of a pupil entrusted to such hands?

“The nation should have reserved the exclusive right of directing the education of its rulers. Unfortunately they are delivered over to perverse tutors, who have been left near the throne, where every thing breathes vice and avarice.”—*Lettres de Cachet*, p. 74.

We may here be allowed to observe, even in Mirabeau's interest, that we are offering only an analysis of a work of his youth. There is reason to believe that, at a later period of his life, he considered :—1st. That if the governor was selected from among the courtiers, the tutor and sub-tutor should be taken without reference to their birth ; 2ndly, that such men, whether lords or plebeians, as Amyot, Péréfixe, La Mothe le Vayer, Montausier, Beauvilliers, Bossuet, Fenelon, and the two Fleurys, were neither flatterers nor corrupters ; 3rdly, that if the law had given the legislature a right to preside over the education of Princes, that is to say, to conduct their education as it thought proper, taking the princes from under the paternal authority, the peace of nations and the dignity and security of Kings would have gained in an equal degree ; 4thly, that the granting of this right would, *ipso facto*, have decided against all families the important question still debated, after a lapse of sixty years, whether the monopoly of education and teaching ought or ought not to be in the hands of the public authority, in order to secure the advantage of the community which it represents and governs.

quences not less dreadful to themselves than to their subjects—they would take good care not to become despots\* ; for they would fear to diminish their power by extending their authority†. They would know that a King who grasps at the whole of the authority, loses it all‡. They would be just and moderate for their own sakes, for men are not oppressed without danger§. They would understand what inflexible truth thus tells them: ‘ If you overturn the social hierarchy of which you are the chief—if you show men their fetters—if their eyes are no longer fascinated—if their labour can no longer satisfy your cupidity—if you foolishly squander the wealth torn from them by your insatiable tyranny—what would they gain by continuing to crouch before you? They will call to mind that they are the most numerous and the strongest, and that you have no other power than that which they either give up to you, or procure for you||.’

“ ‘ O King! to whom nature has given more organs and faculties than to other men, your people and you cling to each other by the sole bond of usefulness which connects you all. If you break it, you endanger your existence, whether by the community taking from you the power from which it derives nothing but oppression and misfortune, instead of protection and

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\* Page 61 of the edition published in 1775.

† P. 81.

‡ P. 93.

§ P. 88.

|| P. 88.

prosperity ; or whether by your success in enervating your subjects by servitude, and ruining their country by the ravages of despotism ; for your exaggerated power will undergo the fate of that country which, being exhausted in men and resources, falls the moment any attempt is made to overthrow it, for it is defended by none but slaves \*. The tyrant has always the weight of his iniquities suspended over his head ; and is more unhappy, in the midst of his grandeur, than Damocles palpitating under the sword, since to the convulsions of terror the despot adds the torture of remorse, if any can exist in a heart accustomed to tyranny†.”

Let us therefore have the courage to enlighten kings. “ But where shall we find philosophers able to censure the great, and defend mankind ? The courage which braves the danger of arms is the most common of any, and yet it is the most valued. The courage of principles, of conduct, and of morals, is much more rare and valuable. We dare not think differently from our fellows, when there is any danger in striving against the general opinion. We cannot even think differently from any other person, when our social institutions have embued us with prejudices which the ambitious and our masters cultivate with great care. The spirit of imitation, adroitly excited

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\* Page 85 of the edition published in 1775.

† P. 67.

by them, becomes the universal feeling. Now, the spirit of imitation is, in every sense, the inverse of genius; it stifles in an equal degree knowledge and principle. Men's minds become enervated, their heads become weak, and their duties are perverted. Every thing follows the despot's impulse, and the torrent of servitude. Passive obedience becomes the fashion, as the love of freedom was the commonest virtue in happier times and under a less arbitrary government\*.

Let us then dare to speak to Kings a language at once sincere and firm, respectful and bold; let us point out to them their true origin, their sole use; the nature, essence, and limits of their power; their abuse of it, or rather the abuse of it to which they are led; the error they commit in governing too much—in forgetting the primitive, stipulated, and fundamental conditions of their authority—in forgetting our rights and their own; and in mistaking their true dignity and real interests. Let us persuade them to limit their power, and give us institutions, not only for our advantage but for their own; for “being instituted to protect the laws, they must, in their turn, be protected by the laws, without which licentiousness and faction cause almost as many evils to society as tyranny does†.”

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\* Page 116 of the edition published in 1775.

† P. 102.



During Mirabeau's detention at the castle of If, he took advantage of his proximity to his paternal residence, and had all the genealogical and other family documents brought to him in order to obtain materials for the interesting narrative inserted at the beginning of the present work, and which contains a brief history of the house of Mirabeau, together with a life of the author's grandfather, the Marquis John Anthony, surnamed the "Silver Neck;" a noble and elevated personage, of whom it appears to us we have a right to say that he has not been better treated in history than he was by his King and his contemporaries; for, even up to the present time, no historian has ever even mentioned his name, which would be completely unknown but for some uninteresting and heavy notices inserted in the genealogical dictionaries.

Having transcribed the whole of Mirabeau's narrative, we have nothing to say of it here. We trust, however, that the reader agrees with us in considering it not only an act of justice to the memory of a man whose greatness of soul, virtue, gallantry, and public services had been forgotten, but likewise a production which, though written in Mirabeau's early youth, is in many respects worthy of the talents he afterwards displayed. It is a new and piquant picture of a race remarkable, through a succession of ages, for a peculiar character of fiery originality and haughty independence. It has the further advantage of giving a lively representation

of the writer himself, whom we there behold as he always was—full of power and eloquence, but incorrect and unequal. He there appears as a nobleman pretty full of the illusions of his order, and at the same time as the man of the people hating despotism; as essentially monarchical, yet as a bold tribune; as excited by a passion for useful reform, and enlightened at an early age by the loftiest and most remote political foreknowledge.

Mirabeau drew up, besides, at the castle of If, for the commandant, M. Dallègre, a tolerably long Case, of which we give no portion here because it relates merely to a private litigation of no importance. We merely mention it in order to point out as a singular fact that Mirabeau's pen was successively employed by the commanding officers of the three prisons in which he was confined: by M. Dallègre at the castle of If, by the Count of St. Mauris at the fortress of Joux, and by M. de Rougemont at the donjon of Vincennes.

During the first part of Mirabeau's detention at Joux, he drew up, on some municipal affairs of the town of Pontarlier, a Case having only a very confined local interest, and in which we find nothing that would interest our readers\*.

At the same period, about the month of August

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\* This paper is alluded to in the "Second Case for Counsel's opinion for the Count of Mirabeau against the Marquis of Monnier," p. 45 (in a note), 12mo. edition.

1775, Mirabeau was requested by the Count of St. Mauris to write an account of the festivities which took place on the coronation of Louis XVI. We have already mentioned this work, which Mirabeau often alluded to afterwards\*. We give the beginning of it, but in a note†.

A few months after this, Mirabeau drew up a Case for a street-porter of Pontarlier, Jeanret by

\* Page 45, in a note of the same "Case for Counsel's opinion." See also "Original Letters from Vincennes," vol. ii. p. 330. This production is entitled. "Letter from M. \* \* to M. \* \*," Geneva, 14 pages 8vo.

† "The greatest of all events for a nation is certainly the inauguration of its King. Then it is that heaven consecrates our monarchs, and draws tighter in some measure the ties by which we are bound to them; then it is that the ministers of the Most High impress upon the sovereign the character of representative of the Divinity. Our destinies are undecided, our hearts in expectation, and our prayers poured forth to the supreme Judge of Kings to ask of him a chosen one from the treasure of his beneficence, not of his anger, and in the intentions of his mercy not of his justice.

"To the pomp displayed, on this day, by the nation and by the *depository of its power and its rights*, our holy religion has added the most august solemnity. It is at the foot of the altar, it is upon the altar itself that our Kings pronounce the oath to be the fathers of their people and the image of divine justice.

"This formidable and sacred oath inspires nations with a consoling confidence. This no doubt is the cause of the rejoicings which take place at the crowning of our Kings; and the first offerings of the public joy, the homage of a premature gratitude, are a great encouragement to a King to make him try to deserve the goodwill and love of his people—a feeling always belonging to good sovereigns."—Pp. 3 and 4.

name, who is several times alluded to in the correspondence from Vincennes\*. This same man, defended by the pen and aided by the purse of Mirabeau, was afterwards so ungrateful as to appear voluntarily and give evidence at the period of the informations which preceded the sentence of the 10th of May 1777. Jeanret's deposition was the strongest and most decisive against the two fugitives†. Copies of this Case must now be very scarce; for even fifty-four years ago, Mirabeau himself found great difficulty in obtaining one, which was incomplete‡.

As it appears unknown to the preceding biographers of Mirabeau, and especially to Peuchet, who would otherwise have transcribed the whole of it, according to his usual practice, we extract some passages, to give another instance of the boldness with which Mirabeau

\* Vol. ii. p. 330; vol. iii. p. 29; vol. iv. pp. 223, 229.

† Original Letters from Vincennes, vol. iii. p. 29.

‡ Ibid. vol. iv. pp. 223, 229. He could in fact obtain only a mutilated copy, which Sophie completed by two manuscript pages. This we learn by the following passage in an unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Boucher, dated August 18th 1780.

“You are an odd fellow, Mr. Good-Angel, to send me, in the handwriting of the Marchioness, the two pages wanting to my copy of the statement for Jeanret. But where is her letter? Faith! you are playing a pretty game with us. Why do you not also send me the rag upon which she wipes her pen? You would perhaps call that also a *word from her!*” This paper was entitled, “Case for Counsel's opinion for Jean Baptiste Jeanret, against one Bricand, *employé* in the farms, &c., 20 pages, 12mo.

could speak out, even though under the operation of a *lettre de cachet*.

Jeanret, bearing a burthen, had been stopped and wounded by an *employé* in the farms of the public revenue\*, although he made no resistance, nor expressed any intention of avoiding the necessary declarations and examinations, or the payment of the regular duty.

“A citizen cannot be arbitrarily arrested, if he is not a malefactor; and even should he be so, either the laws, or the officers of police appointed by the sovereign, must have judged that he is, before he can be deprived of freedom. If these truths are incontestible, the unfortunate Jeanret has now just grounds for claiming the rights of a man and a citizen †.

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“Where are we? Are there no laws, no courts of justice? And what are those men who, at once judges and executioners, decide in their own cause, pronounce judgment, execute it, convert the sabre of a custom-house officer into the sword of justice, and avenge with steel, offences of which they are the only witnesses,

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\* It appears that Jeanret afterwards became the companion of his adversaries. “Jeanret, formerly a smuggler, afterwards an *employé* in the farms, at present a police lackey, and consequently devoted at all times to those noble callings.”—*Second Case for Counsel's opinion for the Count of Mirabeau against the Marquis of Monnier*, p. 98. 12mo edition.

† P. 1.

sometimes the inventors, and always the denunciators believed upon their simple word\*.

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“This defence is simple; all other principles than those upon which it is founded, would be a cruel attack upon the most sacred rights of man, upon his freedom, his safety and his life. Surely it cannot be in France that sabre-law is to be established†!

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“No doubt a too long impunity has emboldened these men, whose insolence is the least of their offences, whose barbarity is the first of their good qualities, and who often date their fortune from the period of their first crime . . . . Magistrates! this is no empty declamation—yield to the horror inspired by what I state . . . .

\* P. 2.

† At a subsequent period, Mirabeau wrote—

“There are states in which the mode of collecting taxes necessitates the most atrocious exactions, and places society in a true state of war. There, the people are oppressed by the farmers of the revenue, who are more destructive and more rapacious than Turkish Pashas; there, those insatiable publicans, take cognisance, to the exclusion of the Courts of Justice, of all the crimes they have invented, punishing them according to laws of their own dictation—thus becoming legislators, or, what is the same thing, despots of the despot, judges and parties in the same cause, and disposing, through their hired servants, of the liberties and lives of citizens, who have violated no other laws than those of these men’s framing.”—*Lettres de Cachet*, vol. i. p. 88.

Even the brother of the wretched man who solicits your justice—even the brother of Jeanret, whilst he was an *employé* in the farms of the revenue, killed two men. On committing the first murder he was promoted to the rank of brigadier; the second procured for him an office with a salary of 700 francs a year, and a gratification of a hundred louis. In vain did the first tribunal in the province make the most vigorous, persevering and truly praiseworthy exertions to bring him to punishment,—his crime was too useful for impunity not to be secured to him. Thus, when Jeanret himself was smitten, the comrades of his assailant exclaimed—‘he will be made a brigadier\*!’”

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“‘But Jeanret raised his stick against the *employé*!’ . . . . No doubt he did, and had he not done so, he would have lost his life, and the *employé* been promoted. What!—you advance upon me with an uplifted sword, and I am to offer my body without defence, to your rage! Nowhere but in Turkey does the base slave kiss the bow-string sent to him by a baser tyrant . . . ‘But Jeanret ought to have obeyed!’ . . . . Whom? The regulation says nothing on this head. Is an *employé* of the revenue farms a legislator? When I do no ill—when I do not disobey the

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\* P. 10.

sovereign,—that is to say, the LIVING LAW, no human being has a right to dictate to me\*.”

This is very strong language, no doubt, from a prisoner ; but Mirabeau spoke with still greater energy in a subsequent production, in which firmness of principle, censure of the acts of the public authorities, and a hatred of monopoly, are the more striking, because the work was undertaken at the request of one of the public authorities.

Soon after Mirabeau was conveyed to the fortress of Joux, he drew up, at the request of the commandant, the Count of St. Mauris, and after much laborious research and study, a paper upon the salt-pans in Franche-Comté. This work is frequently alluded to in the Letters from Vincennes. The original manuscript is in our possession ; as the subject however bears but little interest at the present day, when the institutions, or rather the abuses it describes, have been superseded by a totally different system, any extracts from it would be out of place. There is, however, one chapter which deserves mention, because in it Mirabeau lays down, for the first time, those principles of political economy which he professed with reference to matters of finance, prior to and during the existence of the National Assembly ; and because he there opposes with powerful energy that ill-judged, harsh, and

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\* P. 13.



at times atrocious, spirit of fiscality, pursued for the benefit of a few individuals, and which has not always been more judicious at more recent periods, nor less severe and barbarous, even when the taxes were levied in the name and for direct payment into the exchequer of the state.

The last of Mirabeau's works, prior to his departure for Holland, was never finished. Having found in the library of the fortress of Joux some old histories of Franche-Comté and Savoy, and being constantly excited by a love of labour as well as by the excessive poverty in which he was left by his father, he thought at Pontarlier of writing an extensive history of the province, as afterwards in Holland he projected writing one of the Low Countries, and subsequently one of the Gatinois, because Sophie in her letters had sometimes mentioned certain chronicles written partly in the Latin of the middle ages, partly in the lingua Romana, and even, at his request, had copied some of these chronicles, which copies are now before us. The history of Franche-Comté was to have been preceded by an essay on historical study and composition.

As we have already stated, Mirabeau's first care, on reaching Holland, was to endeavour to procure that literary employment which the poverty of the fugitives and the necessity of concealing themselves had rendered indispensable to their support.

The first work that occupied his attention after

his arrival at Amsterdam, was a pamphlet entitled “Advice to the Hessians,” printed at Cleves in the beginning of 1777 \*, and forming a sheet and a quarter octavo. Frederick II., Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, had agreed to supply England with six thousand Hessian soldiers, who were to be conveyed to America to fight against the “Insurgents.” This disgraceful contract roused a philanthropic indignation in the mind of Mirabeau, already excited by a love of freedom and hatred of despotism.

“Brave Germans!” he wrote, “what disgrace are you allowing to be branded upon your generous brows! At the end of the eighteenth century, shall the nations of the centre of Europe become the mercenary satellites of odious despotism? Shall those valiant Germans who so vehemently defended their freedom against the conquerors of the world, and braved the Roman armies, be basely sold, and shed their blood to support the cause of tyrants? \* \* \* \* \*

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\* “Advice to the Hessians and other nations of Germany, sold by their Sovereigns to England.” Amsterdam, 1777, 8vo, 12 pages, with the following epigraph:—

“Quis furor iste novus? Quo nunc, quo tenditis?  
Heu! miseri cives! non hostem, inimicæque castra;  
Vestras spes uritis.” VIRG.

This pamphlet, as Mirabeau states, was translated into five languages, and republished twice: first, among the pieces which com-

“Ye are sold!—and wherefore, Great God!—To attack a people defending the most just of causes, and who are setting you the noblest example. Why do you not imitate that brave people, instead of attempting to destroy them?

\* \* \* \* \*

Do you know the nation you are about to attack? Do you know what power is derived from the fanaticism of freedom? It is the only fanaticism that is not hateful, the only one respectable; but likewise it is the most powerful of all.

\* \* \* \* \*

Profit by their example; think of your honour—think of your rights. . . . Have you not equal rights with your chiefs? No doubt you have, but you are not sufficiently informed of this. Men pass before sovereigns, who, for the most part, are unworthy of the name. Leave to infamous courtiers, and impious blasphemers, the task of crying up the royal prerogative, and its unlimited rights; and do not you forget that *all* were not made for *one*; that there is an authority superior to all authorities; that he who commands a crime ought not to be obeyed, and that therefore your conscience is the first of your rulers\*.”

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pose the “Espion Dévalisé;” secondly, in the third edition of the “Essay on Despotism.”

\* Long afterwards, the Marquis of Mirabeau wrote, on the subject of this address to the Hessians:—

“Eight years ago, when I had him recaptured in Holland, he

This address, written in a somewhat declamatory, but powerful style, produced an extraordinary effect. An adherent of the Elector wrote a reply, entitled “Counsels of Reason.” We have not seen this reply; but in such a case it could not have proved effective unless very striking both in style and in talent, which however Mirabeau declares it was not. He published a smart rejoinder, entitled “Reply to the ‘Counsels of Reason,’” from which we transcribe the following:—

“When public authority becomes arbitrary and oppressive—when it attacks private property, for the protection of which it was instituted—when it violates the contract which conferred its powers and limited them, resistance is a duty, and cannot be termed revolt. If this is not true, the Batavians are so many criminal insurgents. He who endeavours to recover his freedom and fights for it, exercises a most lawful right;

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had carried to such a length his undertaking to seduce and excite to mutiny the troops then embarking in that country for America, that the Landgrave of Hesse was obliged to conduct his soldiers in person to the port whence they were to sail.—*Unpublished letter from the Marquis of Mirabeau to the Marquis Longo, dated March 14th, 1784.*

“Latria is as instinctive to man, as domesticity is to the dog. But no nation professes so strong an adoration for its princes as the people of Germany, though these princes are mostly fools. The Landgrave of Hesse, having sold his troops to England, was obliged to go in person and put them on board ship. These giants of men, almost at every departure, rose against their officers; but the moment the little monkey appeared, they all fell prostrate in line of battle.”—*Unpublished letter from the same to the same, dated March 24th, 1786.*

and revolt, which is an unlawful act, is essentially different from a confederacy allowed by the constitution of free nations, and more particularly by natural law, which is the universal code whence all laws ought to be derived. \* \* \* \* \*

Treason against the nation is the greatest of crimes; and a people is as superior to its sovereign, as a sovereign is superior to any single individual."

Mirabeau was likewise concerned at Amsterdam in the Dutch edition of the "History of Voyages and Travels\*." He also translated the first volume of Gesner's works†, the first volume of Mrs. Macauley's‡ History of England, and a portion of the "History of Philip II., King of Spain," by Robert Watson. Lastly, he published the pamphlet, "The Reader shall give the Title§." This work treats of music, then not much cultivated in Holland. He examines whether this art is so frivolous as many people believe||; whether it is possible to compose good instrumental music without attempting to describe some particular object¶; whether the passions cannot be expressed by music\*\* ; what connexion there is between the poet's art and that of the musician. This clever little work,

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\* Letters from Vincennes, vol. ii. p. 310.

† Unpublished letter from Sophie to Mirabeau, dated February 5th, 1781.

‡ Catherine Sawbridge, Macauley Graham.

§ London, 1777, 8vo. 96 pages.

|| P. 18.

¶ P. 62.

\*\* P. 61.

which is very entertaining, is by no means unworthy of Mirabeau's reputation. We have evidence that he himself set some value upon it \*. Its style is very different from that of Mirabeau's other works, and bears some resemblance to the writings published in the following years by several literary men engaged in the controversy betwixt the admirers of Gluck and those of Piccini †.

Having sought refuge in Holland to avoid the consequences of a serious offence, the original cause of which was paternal persecution, it was natural that Mirabeau should there seek to defend, if not to justify, himself. A letter dated as from London, Dec. 15th 1776, and addressed, with reference to the "Essay on Despotism," to the authors of the "Gazette Littéraire," was published by them. This letter contains a judi-

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\* "In this little pamphlet there are some ideas concerning music which are not common, and I have contrived to introduce, into the simple apology of an artist, matters which prove that I was above my subject . . . . I must tell you with a simple candour at which you will perhaps laugh, that I consider above mediocrity the page containing my quotation of the article "Genius," from Rousseau's Dictionary of Music, in which there are sublime things, and which, generally speaking, is a very good work, though it might have been better. There is another paragraph, short and profound: that in which I prove that instrumental music is truly that part of the art which does and ought to paint."—*Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to M. Lafage, dated December 5th 1780, and written from the donjon of Vincennes.*

† Mirabeau alludes to this work, in the "Correspondence from Vincennes," vol. ii. p. 419; vol. iii. p. 61; vol. iv. p. 336, &c.

cious and interesting justification, and the very exact particulars which it gives have led to the supposition that it was written by Mirabeau. It contains an abridged history of his youth, his education, the hardships he endured, his campaigns and labours in Corsica, his return to Paris, his contempt for the "quackery of economics," the indignation inspired by the despotism of the last years of Louis XV, the violence of Maupeou, and the frauds of Terray. It mentions his residence in Provence, but not his marriage; it speaks of his debts, the persecutions he suffered, and his quarrel with Villeneuve Moans, but does not allude to the affair at Pontarlier and his flight to Holland.

Less offensive than most of the animadversions in the Vincennes correspondence, this letter contains, nevertheless, some very bitter remarks upon the conduct of the Marquis of Mirabeau, as a husband and a father, and exposes his silly weakness as an author and the chief of a sect. We wish we had evidence to refute the grounds upon which this production is attributed to Mirabeau's pen. It also bears the signature S. M., being the initials of Saint Matthew, a name which he had assumed in Holland. But we must candidly admit that we share the general opinion in regard to this imputed authorship. We shall, however, insert no extracts from the letter, because we have already stated, in much greater detail, the facts which it contains.

This letter is the only personal defence which Mirabeau ever voluntarily published against his father. Many other attacks were imputed to him; and the belief in such an imputation excited most powerfully the wrath of the Marquis and the Bailli.

But Mirabeau did not cease to strive against this injustice, which we have ourselves shown to be such, and he alludes to it at every opportunity \*. He confesses, and in terms of repentance and sorrow †, a participation in a single case drawn up in the name and on

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\* Original Letters from Vincennes, vol. i. p. 70; vol. ii. p. 414; vol. iii. pp. 236, 353, 354, 400, 410, 481; vol. iv. p. 310, &c.

† “ With regard to the case published in favour of my mother, and to the ‘Anecdote to be added to the voluminous Collection of Philosophical Hypocrisies,’ [another title to the letter by S. M.] which Dupont did not know, and which I have confessed to him, I found it shorter and more honourable to pass condemnation upon myself. Not but I might have cavilled, convinced as I am that, with reference to myself, my father has exceeded the rights of any one man over another, and consequently those of a father over his son, and has thus snapped asunder the chain of my duty towards him;—convinced as I am, also, that the principles of order and justice, upon which the law is founded, render it incumbent upon the oppressed to employ them against his oppressor; and that, in our enslaved countries, personal influence cannot be arrested in its iniquitous and crooked progress, except by raising up public opinion against it. I have perhaps been induced to write against my father, without having so much upon my conscience as would be produced by such an act under any other circumstances. Nevertheless, I confess that it was deeply repugnant to my feelings. I have repented of it—I do so still; and if my cursed facility in writing, and the pressing instances of my poor mother had not hastened this production, it would never have been written. I yielded, therefore, in



behalf of his mother in 1777 \*, and which is certainly moderate in comparison with those which she after-

this case, though my recrimination has been but feeble."—*Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Boucher, dated May 12th 1779.*

The original of this letter, in Mirabeau's own handwriting, is now before us, and yet, among others, we find the above passage transcribed, word for word, in page 235, vol. iii. of the Vincennes correspondence, in a letter addressed to Sophie, dated May 5th 1779. The remainder of the same letter occupies from page 235 to page 245 inclusive. It may be thought that, on this occasion, Mirabeau copied from himself,—a very common practice of his; but on reflection, this supposition must be rejected; for it is impossible to imagine that the prisoner writing to his mistress, who was also a prisoner, should literally repeat a passage written four days previously to Boucher, who read all the letters sent to Sophie. The true explanation of this singularity is the fact, that Manuel, whenever the letters to Sophie left a blank, filled it up by applying to Sophie those letters which Mirabeau had written to his friends, and among others to Boucher, who left at the police office all those addressed to himself. We shall give further evidence of this fact.

\* This case, signed "LACROIX-FRAINVILLE, Advocate," fills 58 pages—34 of text and 24 of notes. Paris: P. G. Simon, 1777.

The testimony of Mirabeau himself (and when he writes to Sophie no suspicion can be attached to his evidence) proves that he had but little to do with this composition.

"This copy of my *Case* is a piece of ridiculous folly. Are you not aware that one-half of it is not mine?—that the remainder was published without my knowledge, and without correction?—and that the part done by me consists only of letters written in haste? Who the devil gave you these shapeless fragments?"—*Original Letters from Vincennes*, vol. ii. p. 414.

To this case was added "Counsel's Opinion for the Count of Mirabeau, under interdict, against the Marquis of Mirabeau, his father," written by an advocate named Groubert de Groubental, and containing the letters which Mirabeau, during his concealment, had

wards published during her lawsuit. These latter Cases are seven in number, and form a very thick quarto volume. We must add, that Mirabeau's sketch was even very much modified, as is proved by the following passages from two letters, one from the Marquis, the other from the Bailli of Mirabeau.

"The reporter \* of my lawsuit," wrote the former, "spoke to me about this Case, and the source whence it sprang, assuring me that it was in the hands of a very prudent man; instead of which, this young advocate, in order to take the credit of the style due to the rascal in Holland, has adopted a Case which the latter sent, has made it the groundwork of his own, and has embroidered and double-embroidered it †."

"Your son," wrote the Bailli, "has proved to me by letters bearing the postmarks of Paris and Holland, that he wrote only at his mother's request, and that he did not write one half of what we were told was his ‡."

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written to Malesherbes. This was Mirabeau's real offence; and though in our third volume we have shown that which might have extenuated it, even in the eyes of the Marquis of Mirabeau, still we do not pretend to excuse such a fault; but, in proportion as we are sincere in condemning it, we are bound to oppose all exaggeration.

\* M. de Malezien.

† Unpublished letter from the Marquis to the Bailli of Mirabeau, dated April 3rd 1777.

‡ Unpublished letter from the Bailli to the Marquis of Mirabeau, dated November 16th 1782. A statement in justification of him-

The publication of the letters from the Donjon of Vincennes, has made known the immensity of Mirabeau's studies and labours during his captivity of forty-two months. Many have been lost, others remained unfinished. Among the lost or incomplete, we may mention a translation of Horace\*, one of Ovid†, one of Catullus and Propertius‡, one of Tasso's Aminta§, a treatise on Mythology||, a general grammar¶, an

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self has also been attributed to Mirabeau, who is said to have written it in 1775, at the period when, as we have already shown, he was demanding redress against the interdict, and the pretence upon which he had been thrown into prison, claiming to be sent for trial before judges independent of his adverse party the Baron of Villeneuve Moans. During the prosecution of the suit at Aix, Mirabeau was accused of having inserted, in this Case, letters in which his wife was mentioned to M. de Malesherbes in a very unfavourable manner; but, exclusively of the explanations we have before given, we have evidence proving that, even supposing Mirabeau drew up the case, he had nothing to do with its publication.

“ They (the Marchioness of Mirabeau and Madame de Cabris) have published without his sanction this Case, which gives him the *coup de grace*, and is nothing more than a Case for counsel's opinion, with three rigmaroles attached to it, which he successively wrote to M. de Malesherbes at the period of the fine debate which you witnessed.”—*Unpublished letter from the Marquis to the Bailli of Mirabeau, dated October 28th 1776.*

\* Letters from Vincennes, vol. ii. pp. 108, 245.

† Ibid. Vol. ii. pp. 418, 419; vol. iii. pp. 33, 81, 123.

‡ Ibid. Vol. ii. p. 107.

§ Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Boucher, dated August 2nd 1781.

|| Letters from Vincennes, vol. ii. p. 373; vol. iii. pp. 122, 126.

¶ Ibid. vol. iii. p. 122.

essay on literature \*, a drama †, a tragedy ‡, a collection of prose elegies §, dissertations on the use of regular troops ||, on the Obedience due to Governments ¶, and on Religious Houses \*\*. We have nothing to state concerning these productions, not a fragment of which has reached us.

The other works written wholly or in part by Mirabeau during his captivity, and which have since been published at different periods, are—translations of Tibullus ††, Boccaccio ‡‡, and Johannes Secundus §§, a collection of Tales || ||, the “Lettres de Cachet and State

\* Letters from Vincennes, vol. iii. pp. 81, 122, 149, 248.

† Ibid. Vol. iii. pp. 161, 274.

‡ Ibid. Vol. ii. p. 108.

§ Ibid. Vol. iv. pp. 166, 169, 354.

|| Ibid. Vol. i. Preliminary discourse, p. 37.

¶ Ibid.

\*\* Ibid.

†† Ibid. Vol. ii. pp. 108, 245, 415; vol. iii. p. 555; vol. iv. pp. 165, 168, 179, 188, 193, 204, 304, 328. Vitry, pp. 2, 7, 8, 14, 23, 38, 49, &c.

‡‡ Ibid. Vol. iv. pp. 165, 179, 242, 256, 266, 275, 287, &c.

§§ Ibid. Vol. ii. pp. 108, 327, 340, 342, 372; vol. iv. pp. 165, 179, 247, 266, &c.

|| || Ibid. Vol. ii. p. 342; vol. iv. p. 61, 75, 92, 104, 126, 140, 165, 179, &c. Mirabeau finished this collection in December 1779. Though the work contains nothing immoral, it is nevertheless unworthy of the author. His extreme poverty forced him to write these tales.

“These pieces are, I admit, very frivolous; but you may point out to the publisher that besides being tolerably well written, they suppose a knowledge of five different languages. Consequently, if

Prisons \*,' the "Espion Dévalisé †," the "Errótica Biblion," and the "Conversion."

he has any plan of a work that I could undertake, he will take confidence in us. This will please me much, will occupy me, and will help Sophie and my daughter."—*Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Boucher, dated December 18th 1779.* "Crush me with work if you can. I ask it in the name of my daughter."—*Unpublished letter from the same to the same, dated January 26th 1780.*

A short time before Mirabeau quitted the Donjon of Vincennes, he again made the same request, in a letter which we have already mentioned.

"I entreat you, my dear angel, not to neglect my views upon your bookseller, because you think we are at the end—of my captivity, true—but not of my poverty. I expect that my father will display the extreme of parsimony. Now Sophie is in want, and in debt; where shall we find wherewith to meet these things, unless I work?"—*Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Boucher, dated September 28th 1780.*

A month before his release, he returned to the charge.

"Let us think of providing for the future before distress is felt. Let your bookseller place immediately in my hands the 'Memoirs of the Academy of Inscriptions.' Every month I will supply a volume, according to the plan I have stated and written to him; and I assure you that it will be a valuable work, the editions of which may be multiplied as much as he pleases. This is one of those undertakings which every body cannot execute, but which every body may conceive. For this reason, we must not allow ourselves to be forestalled. The title might be: 'Miscellany of literature,' or 'Choice selections of the most interesting articles for all classes of readers, taken from the Memoirs of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres.' Surely this would be a gold mine to a publisher."—*Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Boucher, dated November 3rd 1780.*

\* Letters from Vincennes, vol. ii. p. 222; vol. iv. pp. 203, 204, 320, 323. Vitry, pp. 37, 57, 76, 117, 119, 125, 281, &c.

† Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Vitry, p. 280 of Vitry's collection.

We shall not allude to the two last, except to deplore the cause which produced them, and which we must look for in the deep pecuniary distress to which Mirabeau was reduced in the Donjon of Vincennes with a pension of only 600 francs \* a year, in want of actual necessities, as was likewise Sophie at her convent. We shall only add that these disgraceful productions did not leave Mirabeau's hand in the state in which they now appear to the very small number of persons who read them. They have been falsified by covetous publishers, who have made the most disgusting additions, as is proved by many fragments which we possess of the latter work, and by the entire autograph manuscript of the former; and that by the supposition of the "Good Angel" having taken charge of these manuscripts, a most unjust imputation has been cast upon the prudent and virtuous Boucher†. The proof of this has already been published ‡. It is well known, besides, that neither of these works was published till long after Boucher's death; and it is not difficult to believe that publishers induced, by a hope of gain, to disgrace themselves by so base a speculation, would have lost no time in publishing.

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\* £ 24 sterling.

† Peuchet among others has accused Boucher of this, vol. i. p. 316; and also the writer of an article in the "Révue de Paris," of March 1831, vol. xxiv. No. 3, p. 157.

‡ See Vitry's collection, pp. 23, 123.

The translation of Tibullus has been claimed by Poisson de la Chabeaussière, son of Mirabeau's tutor\*. To disprove this pretension, it is only necessary to refer, in the letters from Vincennes †, and in those published by Vitry‡, to the different accounts which Mirabeau gives of this laborious work. We have in our possession the manuscript in the handwriting of young Lavisé, whom we have already mentioned as Mirabeau's secretary in prison. This manuscript is surcharged with notes, corrections, and additions, in the handwriting of Mirabeau. We have likewise, in the unpublished letters, and, among others, in more than a hundred written to Boucher, abundant proof that Mirabeau was executing this translation as a work of long and painful labour, and not one of rapid and

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\* In a letter, dated June 28th 1796, addressed to the editors of the "Décade Philosophique," several writers have mentioned this singular claim without contradicting or even understanding it. For instance, Cadet Gassicourt, page 43 of the first edition of his work, and page 38 of the second edition, terms La Chabeaussière a *littérateur* BETTER SKILLED IN THE ART OF WRITING VERSES. Did he not know, or had he forgotten, that this translation is written in prose?

† Vol. ii. pp. 107, 245, 415; vol. iii. p. 555; vol. iv. pp. 165, 168, 179, 188, 193, 204, 328, 504, &c. &c.

‡ Pp. 2, 7, 8, 14, 23, 33, 49, &c. In page 8, is the following sentence, which Mirabeau seems to have written as if on purpose to destroy by anticipation, fifteen years beforehand, the supposition which we are opposing:—

"Take notice, that all you may find in the handwriting of M. de la Chabeaussière was written under my dictation."

easy revision. This, and the "Lettres de Cachet," constituted his principal occupation at Vincennes\*.

It is therefore certain that Mirabeau was the real translator of Tibullus, and that La Chabeaussière had no share in the translation. It is merely for the sake of truth that we insist upon this point, as we do not think that this work has at all added to Mirabeau's

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\* When first Mirabeau undertook to translate Tibullus he thought only of making a present to his mistress. "My intention was to have it bound in blue morocco leather, lined with white satin, and lettered on the back—SOPHIE'S HOURS. See whether such a thing would exceed our finances. A small gold heart must be fastened to the little tassel of hair." — *Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Boucher, dated August 10th 1779*. These are the "Sophie's Hours," alluded to in the correspondence from Vincennes, vol. iii. pp. 443, 470, 495, 527, 534, 555, 557; and the tassel of hair attached to this manuscript is the subject of the jokes in pages 225 and 226 of the same volume. It is probable that the edition published in 1798 was printed from these "Hours;" that is to say, from Mirabeau's own manuscript—an edition which, on being compared with our manuscript in Lavisé's handwriting, and surcharged with Mirabeau's autograph notes, offers many omissions and imperfections, which Mirabeau, by dint of labour, afterwards remedied. With reference to this manuscript, we here give an extract, which proves that the police, though so favourably disposed to the prisoner, was at times very particular.

"Lavisé, the son, has just told me from you that I must erase from his copy of Tibullus all that is in my handwriting. Why, my dear trembler, it would be a great chance indeed that my hand were recognised by some one of the censors, when I have never sent anything to them, and for a reason well enough known. No one could therefore guess that I did the Tibullus. Besides, it would not suit me to put my name to so frivolous a work." — *Unpublished letter from the same to the same, dated July 17th 1780*.



fame, the real lustre of which lies in his public life. His celebrity as a philosopher, an orator, and a statesman, is so dazzling, that it would throw into the shade scientific and literary merit much greater than any he displayed.

This translation of Tibullus, though perhaps the best extant, has been considered but a very mediocre work. Far from finding fault with this judgment, we think it could scarcely have been different. In the first place, every translation from verse into prose is more or less a falsehood; the most eloquent prose writer is, to the fact he translates, as a weak draughtsman is to a powerful painter, and the translation is to the original what a cold and dull drawing is to a warm and brilliant picture.

But it seems to us that another reason still more decisive, which prevents this work from rising above mediocrity, is, that circumstances forced the translator to undertake a thing for which he was neither qualified nor prepared.

Had Mirabeau been a poet, and one of superior order, like Tibullus, endowed with the same temper and disposition, animated with the same feelings and placed in the same situation, he still would have been badly prepared for his attempt; he would have had to overcome the disadvantages arising from the language in which he wrote—a language which, notwithstanding the merit that really belongs to it, and the immense

popularity given to it by some immortal poets, and great original writers (not translators), is evidently inferior, as a vehicle of poetry, to the Latin which has so much precision and energy, so much boldness and rapidity, so much picturesque and inexhaustible variety, and the peculiar form, and turns of which, its happy combinations and its harmonious periods, cannot be given in our modern idioms, formed for different habits, different organs, and perhaps different senses.

But was Mirabeau a poet? Certainly not; for he did not practise poetry; neither had he any great liking nor esteem for it. In the ancient and modern languages, in which he was well versed, he had but slightly read the epic and dramatic poets, and works of imagination and taste. But moralists, philosophers, historians, jurists, economists, and writers on public law, had constituted, almost exclusively, his favourite studies, in the pursuit of which he was assiduous and indefatigable. Mirabeau had devoted his whole life to matters bearing upon politics, and works of literature were to him nothing more than a passing recreation, or relaxation from severer pursuits.

On the other hand, had he any mental affinity with the poet he was translating? Those of our readers who are acquainted with both have already answered this question: they know that Tibullus, whose happily constituted nature seems to have owed nothing to study or to art—who allowed his heart to speak without ever

showing his mind—who, unknown to himself, has so much ease, grace, and poetry—was a man of sickly constitution, weak, timid, enervated, dreamy, and melancholy. Was Mirabeau the same?—could such be his physical temperament, when his mind was so positive, and at the same time so ardent and so ambitious; with vigour exuberant even to overflowing; with audacity even to recklessness; with energy even to exaggeration? Could his intractable and unbending nature assume the servile flexibility indispensable to a translator? Certainly not; the infinite lay betwixt the two natures of the original poet and his imitator. Their respective feelings and situations were not more alike: the one yielded to all the weakness of a tender heart, the other gave way to all the impetuosity of a fiery temperament. The first was gently moved by the milder affections, the second was a prey to the wildest passions. That one was rocked by the happiest illusions, this one was borne upon by the severest afflictions. Tibullus was saturated with a life of voluptuousness, Mirabeau was dragged from prison to prison. The only shade common to men so dissimilar, was their mutual hatred of flattery (of which poets are generally considered fond), and their spirit of independence; for, like Mirabeau, Tibullus flattered nothing but friendship; and whilst Virgil and Horace offered their incense to Augustus and Mæcenas, Tibullus, notwithstanding the example they set him, and the earnest

entreaties no doubt made to him, refused even to mention by name any of the great men of the day—for if he alluded to Messala it was only as a private friend. Mirabeau, also, never addressed the powers contemporary with him, except to offer them advice, or accuse and threaten them in the name of the public interest.

It is therefore not surprising that this translation of Tibullus is at best but an imperfect copy of the original. Besides the natural unfitness of the translator, and the insufficiency of the idiom he used, the precipitation and weariness inspired by this labour of necessity and not of inspiration, are but too evident. It cannot be said that the translation is unfaithful; but, with some few exceptions, the dry sense is given without the mind, the effect, the motion, and the colouring of Tibullus. The work is not faulty; but it is diffuse, unconnected, and without fervour. A multitude of shades are wanting in it, and the loss of these is by no means compensated by the tints which the translator has taken from his own palette. In one word, this translation is a very ordinary work, except in the notes, which, like the “*Essay on Despotism*” and the “*Lettres de Cachet*,” prove that Mirabeau, while in prison, employed his time in the most arduous and patient investigations of a branch of knowledge difficult to acquire. And as even in the notes on Tibullus there is nothing which others have not done equally well, if not better, in the same kind of labour, we are of opinion

that this translation would never have outlived Mirabeau had he not acquired other claims to the attention of posterity.

Having said thus much, we dismiss the translation of Tibullus without further notice. Neither shall we say any thing of that of "the Basia" of Johannes Secundus\*, which, though it doubtless displays grace and elegance, is nothing but a paraphrase conveying no correct idea of the original.

We shall but very slightly allude to the collection presented as a translation of Boccaccio †, but which, as the author himself confesses in his introduction, is nothing more than simple sketches of some of the tales in the "Decameron," a work in which we must admire the imagination, and more especially the style, of a writer who created his own language, but which we must admit to be shapeless, crude, and intolerable to modern readers. Mirabeau imitated some of the licentious tales which alone are known to the general reader, but took no notice of the other articles which abound in the Decameron, because they neither suited his views nor the public taste.

We shall mention only by name his "Collection of Tales," which, like the above translations, was written

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\* Mirabeau speaks of it in the letters from Vincennes, vol. ii. pp. 106, 327, 340.

† Ibid. Vol. iv. pp. 165, 247, 256, 266, 275, 287, &c.

to order, and Mirabeau was obliged to undertake them on account of the excessive poverty which increased his sufferings in confinement.

We must dwell a little longer upon the "Lettres de Cachet and State Prisons," a composition which occupied Mirabeau a great deal, as may be seen by his letters. He set some value upon this work, "which," he says, "will not die\*." Strong in the noble and patriotic feeling which induced him to undertake it, and certain of being understood by the two good men upon whom his fate at Vincennes depended, he feared not to communicate his work to them.

"I have a manuscript," he wrote to Boucher, "which, setting aside all false modesty, I think valuable and quite new. It is in a very bad place here, and I wish it to be in your hands. But, will you return it to me, even if it should treat of *lettres de cachet* and state prisons? Find means to let me know this, and whether I may forward it to you †. I send you the Black Book without reading it again; but remember that I entrust it to M. Boucher, and not to the man in office; that you have promised to return it to me the moment I regain my freedom; and that, if my captivity lasts, you will do me the pleasure to send it back to me a few months hence, in order that I may add proofs and

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\* Letters from Vincennes, vol. iii. p. 63.

† Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Boucher, dated March 11th 1779.

explanations of which you only yet see the summary, and which will be a collection of texts. This is what I have to say : the first part is, I believe, a good work ; it cost me a whole year of labour, and I would not lose this manuscript, which contains views, ideas, and things. The second part has not a word of exaggeration, and will shew you whether or not I am as ill-informed upon the subject as you suppose. My dear angel, your looks, your words, and your very features breathe honesty. Look then into this work. Many horrible things occur which you might prevent with a single word \*. My only object in writing is to be useful †. Ueflect upon the part that concerns yourself, with reference to your office, and believe the word of a man of honour who

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Boucher, dated March 27th 1779.

† “ If the superiors have no wish to know the truth, or if they fear it, this writing will not be of much use, because I plead against them before their own tribunal ; and assuredly they are better informed than I, regarding their own intentions. Nevertheless, what can they offer in objection, or in reply, to a man absolutely disinterested, since he will be no longer under the sway of him (M. de Rougemont) whose tyranny he denounces to them by divulging his base barbarity ? Not to repress such barbarity when known, is to authorise it. Be that, however, as it may, I entertain a hope at least of opening the eyes of some relatives more prejudiced than inhuman. If I moved them regarding the fate of those unhappy men whose misfortunes I have long shared, the remembrance of it would be less bitter. If I contributed any thing towards obtaining their freedom, were it only the release of one among them, I should look with calmness upon the risks I might run by propagating these bold truths.”—*Lettres de Cachet*, vol. ii. p. 79.

attests to you the truth, and swears, at his last moment \*, that he has not exaggerated, nor even divulged the whole of it. Although the first part of this book is too much below the noble subject, and even my own ideas, yet it contains what nobody else will dare to say, or can say †. Confess then that you find nothing in my manuscript that would not please an honest man, nothing that is not in keeping with the tone, the feelings, and the duties of a good citizen. If you held the censorship, would you hesitate to sanction its publication? But I ask not this of you . . . . And yet were I to ask it of you, and it were necessary, I should obtain your sanction ‡. Shall I not therefore get a word from you, with your stoical or your diplomatic prudence, concerning my Black Book? At all events, return me the manuscript, even if you say not a word about it, for the book is good and I will not be separated from it §.

Mirabeau was not less candid with his father on the same subject.

\* When Mirabeau wrote this, he believed that he was about to die.

† Letters from Vincennes, vol. iv. p. 323.

‡ Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Boucher, dated April 7th, 1780.

§ Unpublished letter from the same to the same, dated May 7th 1780. The only *word* which Mirabeau obtained from Boucher's *prudence* was the following:—

“I return you your ‘Lettres de Cachet.’ I have not read the manuscript. I know not what may be said of it; but it cannot pass through my hands.”—*Unpublished letter from Boucher to Mirabeau, dated May 12th 1780.*



“My work on State Prisons is not without merit, for my soul, emboldened by persecution, has elevated my genius which suffering had brought low. I so little believe that I have exceeded the boundary line of duty of a good subject, or the moderation of a prudent citizen, that I shall immediately send the manuscript to him who has the inspection of the place in which you have confined me. He is worthy to hear the truth, and capable of knowing it\*.”

The Marquis of Mirabeau did not reply to this communication any more than to the other letters written by his son from Vincennes; and it was not till five years subsequently that he gave the following opinion of the “Lettres de Cachet.”

“This book is a furious farrago of nonsense, in which he has piled up all that can be said against despotism, joined to impudent pleadings in favour of rascals. It is seditious folly let loose†”.

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\* Letters from Vincennes, vol. ii. p. 222.

† Unpublished letter from the Marquis to the Bailli of Mirabeau, dated February 6th 1783. We here give another extract containing a pretty just reproach in reference to M. de Rougemont, who is very violently attacked in the “Lettres de Cachet.”

“Very well, master! But in reading Voltaire, and Linguet, in their descriptions of the Bastille and Vincennes, we are sure to swallow as many lies as lives. What a noble use of time and memory! a stinking vessel can never furnish a good liquid; and for instance, to quote the ‘Lettres de Cachet,’ this Rougemont which the fellow treats so vilely, was his flatterer and the lackey of his grand airs. He was always at my house and elsewhere singing the

At length Mirabeau sent his manuscript to M. Lenoir, to whom he wrote :

“The only one of my manuscripts which I think interesting, useful, and stamped with a certain degree of maturity, has always been intended for you. Cast an attentive eye over it. I appeal to my honour, and to the author of my being at a moment when I know not what may be his decision regarding myself, for the truth of all the facts I have advanced. No doubt, they deserve your most serious attention\*.”

In the ardour of his philanthropic and patriotic views, Mirabeau wanted to present this book to the King himself.

“I will say to him :”—he wrote to Sophie, “Learn,

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fellow's praises, and he has been rewarded for it as you see. All the cases of oppression he mentions, are well known histories of good-for-nothing scoundrels. These fellows lend each other arms and manifestos, and all is swallowed as gospel-truth. You judge wisely of this production which others have attempted to make me believe a fine thing; to which I have always replied : ‘I perceive that the age has recourse to dead men. So much the better—this consoles me for departing!’” *Unpublished letter from the Marquis of Mirabeau to the Marquis Longo, dated June 9th 1783.* We may add, that M. de Rougemont revenged himself, in a manner as moderate as it was justifiable, by publishing fragments of thirteen letters, written from June 19th to December 31st 1777, in which Mirabeau, during the first six months of his detention, talks of his “lively gratitude.” This little collection is entitled “Authentic Letters from the Count of Mirabeau, serving as a supplement to his work on *Lettres de Cachet and State Prisons.*” Paris 1789, 47 pages 8vo.

\* Letters from Vincennes, vol. iv. p. 320.

from me what you will never know from any body else ! This is the fruit of my watchings and of my tears ! From the gloomy cell of a hateful prison have I paid my debt to you and to my country, so far as I am able, seeing the weakness of my talents, and by being absolutely deprived of assistance. Learn the iniquities practised in your name, and in defiance of the most virtuous of your delegates ! Crush those subaltern tyrants who deprive you of your noblest prerogative, that of reserving to yourself the treasures of mercy of which you are the sole dispenser, and of leaving severity to the law. Read, Sir, and search for the truth which will be hidden from you unless you find it out yourself. I have not purchased too dearly, at the cost of my sight, my health, and half perhaps of my life, this moment when I am able to tell and show it to you, if the consequences turn out as fortunate for my fellow-citizens as I may reasonably expect from your benevolence and your equity \*.' ”

We shall be pardoned for giving these particulars if, without even considering the merit of the work, the reader will take the trouble to observe how much the above extracts do honour to the Author's memory, by proving that even when he considered himself upon the point of death, he defended justice and humanity against despotism, and devoted his last thoughts to the

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\* Ibid. Vol. v. p. 6.

holy cause of which, contrary to his expectations, he was afterwards to become the most eloquent and most courageous defender\*.

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\* These same extracts render it unnecessary for us to refute a species of romantic tradition propagated by writers who have attempted to speak of Mirabeau without knowing him, and without even taking the trouble to read the work in which they might best have studied him, that is to say, the *Letters from Vincennes*. According to this tradition the work upon *Lettres de Cachet* and *State Prisons* was very secretly written in the *Donjon of Vincennes*; and when Mirabeau left this prison he concealed in the lining of his waistcoat the rough manuscript consisting of blank leaves torn from books upon which the captive had written his work. The real manuscript, wholly in Mirabeau's hand-writing and in our hands, is an assemblage of uniform and regular books of sheets of paper stitched together, and the care with which they are written attests the application, entirely unshackled, of the author. The first writer who published this fabulous tradition is *Cadet-Gassicourt*, p. 25 of the first edition of his work, and 19 of the second. The same error exists in *P. Chaussard's* summary, p. 44 of the second edition; in the "*Nouvelle Biographie des Contemporains*" by Messrs. *Arnault, Jay, Jouy, &c.* vol. xiii. p. 351; also in *M. Merilhou's* work.

The following is another mistake by a writer who, to say the truth, is renowned for the inaccuracy and thoughtlessness of his assertions. The *Abbé de Montgaillard*, who speaks of Mirabeau's work without having even read the title page, (for he calls it vol. i. p. 281, "*Letters on Lettres de Cachet*") asserts, vol. ii. p. 170, in a note, that according to the "*Red Book*," Mirabeau received, in 1776, 3,500 livres for his manuscript. Now in 1776, the author was either in concealment or in prison, and had not yet thought of this work, which as we have shown, was written several years after.

Lastly, we must mention another assertion equally false, but of a more serious character, which would deserve a lengthened comment from us here, had we not already refuted it in several parts of the

The book upon *Lettres de Cachet* and State Prisons is so well known that we have not much to add to the preceding purely biographical mention we have made of it. We therefore give, in a note \*, a simple analysis

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present work. Some pamphleteers, among others Peltier, to whom a pamphlet is attributed entitled "*Domine Salvum fac Regem*," have stated that the book upon *Lettres de Cachet* was written by the Bailli of Mirabeau; and M. Barbier, in the "*Dictionnaire des Ouvrages anonymes et pseudonymes*" (Paris: Barrois, 1823, vol. ii. p. 269, No. 10,015), gravely adds: "the work contains too many quotations to allow of the belief that it was written at the BASTILLE."

Whoever has read our previous volumes must be convinced that the Bailli of Mirabeau had nothing to do with the "*Lettres de Cachet*;" and whoever has read a page of that work must have discovered the real author, who appears in every sentence. With reference to the quotations, which are very numerous, Mirabeau had obtained them during his preceding studies, and preserved them in the developed extracts he was always in the habit of making, for he always read pen in hand. We possess a portion of these extracts.

\* CHAP. I.—Arbitrary orders formally censured by our laws ever since the foundation of the monarchy up to our own times. Cruelty of the Valois dynasty, and particularly of Louis XI. towards state prisoners. At what period *Lettres de Cachet* began to increase. First and only edict that authorises them.

CHAP. II.—Principles of natural law. Formation of human societies. Indispensable condition of such communities. Respect of property, or justice founded upon physical sensibility, love of self, and reason imperiously demanded by our nature, independently of any religious system, is the first tie that binds men together, and the only point of union necessary to society.

CHAP. III.—The preceding principles are independent of any system of religion, and it would be a great good if this truth were generally admitted. Priestly despotism the necessary cause of civil despotism.

CHAP. IV.—Collusion between the civil and ecclesiastical autho-

of it, consisting of the contents of the chapters in the first part—being the only part containing a theoretical

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rities. Justice, the common source of all human connexion, is the foundation of the reciprocal rights of the people and the sovereign, whatever be the origin of the different governments established among men.

CHAP. V.—Origin of the right of punishment. Distribution of the judicial authority. The exercise of justice is absolutely incompatible with arbitrary orders and imprisonments. These are more formidable to political liberty, and more intolerable to the individuals who suffer by them, than any other species of vexation, or even than sanguinary violence.

CHAP. VI.—Arbitrary and unlimited imprisonments, far from being necessary and proper in state affairs, become the more unjust and baneful. Licentiousness, far from being the extreme of liberty and its natural effect, is precisely the reverse.

CHAP. VII.—Proofs of fact. Limited authority has always been the most severe. In France, the government need fear nothing but its own excesses. Despotism has always led to revolution; and the union in one person of the three powers, legislative, executive, and judicial, has always produced despotism.

CHAP. VIII.—Whenever the monarchy is unlimited, chance alone can preserve a nation from tyranny. Refutation of the principles of the Economists on this point. The government does not cease being responsible for private evil, except when it does not disturb the due course of law. If it pretends to do everything by itself, despotism is inevitable, with all its consequences.

CHAP. IX.—Refutation of a principle of Montesquieu, who thinks that, in certain cases, liberty must be suspended. The iniquity of Ostracism. Censorship. BILL OF ATTAINDER. THE HABEAS CORPUS ACT.

CHAP. X.—Police of great cities. Examples of Holland and England. Meaning of the word NECESSITY in its political acceptance.

CHAP. XI.—The prerogative of inflicting arbitrary and unlimited imprisonment, considered with reference to individuals. Are there

development of the subject ; for the second is nothing more than a description of the interior of the prison of Vincennes, with an account of the petty exactions practised there, and the vexatious severity of the commandant ; a description in which Mirabeau has been reproached with giving a multitude of insignificant details which would better have suited a complaint addressed to the government, and are unworthy of the attention of posterity \*. The third part, which with the second

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crimes which ought not to be revealed? Composition of state prisons. Effects which must result from a residence in them, where oppression equalises persons and things, whether the prisoners communicate with each other or whether they do not. Houses of Force. State prisons considered with reference to the population.

CHAP. XII.—View of the history of France from Philippe-le-Bel to our own times.

CHAP. XIII.—Lettres de cachet threaten the great, that is to say, those who invoke them, still more than persons of inferior station ; but they may despoil both classes of all they possess. The spirit of caste, and the jealousy of the several orders of the state towards one another, support despotism. Legal forms are a necessary safeguard to liberty and innocence. Even the good that can be effected by illegal means is fatal to society.

CHAP. XIV.—If *lettres de cachet* confound the innocent with the guilty, it is a sufficient reason for perpetually abolishing this method ; for any method that tends to sacrifice an innocent man, were he alone against all, to a pretended public interest, is tyrannical. *Lettres de cachet* do not preserve families from disgrace, by withdrawing the guilty from society and from the regular courts of justice. If, according to our prejudices, infamy were not personal, the sovereign might make it so if he pleased.

\* Without being stopped by this consideration, Mirabeau was anxious to publish every thing, in order to warn the government,

constitutes the second volume, is scarcely anything more than a collection of documents in support of the author's statements; so that, strictly speaking, the work is comprised in the first volume, in which alone the reader must seek one of the author's principal claims to fame.

We speak not of literary fame; for as a literary work it has many blemishes. It is often very diffuse; there is a great abuse of quotations, much declamation, and inequality, and numerous imperfections of method and style. This book, therefore, though the fruit of vast reading, and the most assiduous labour\*, is less remarkable for literary skill than for immense research wholly directed to a patriotic object, and displaying a patience equal to that of the most laborious among

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make it uneasy, and even coerce it by an exposure, of which, however, he boldly assumed the responsibility.

"I will state all I know concerning the houses peopled by *lettres de cachet*: all that I know from having seen it myself; for I have imposed upon myself a law not to advance a single fact of which I have not been either a witness or an example, and of which I am unable, if necessary, to give legal proof. And may I be punished by the eternal contempt of honest men if I alter or exaggerate in the least degree any of the details contained in this work."—*Lettres de Cachet*, vol. i. p. 259.

\* It appears in one of the letters written to Chamfort by Mirabeau, that the latter wished to re-write and correct the "*Lettres de Cachet*," and that he requests Chamfort's assistance in this undertaking. Evidently Chamfort did not care to comply with this request, and Mirabeau had not time to do it alone. *Letter dated November 4th 1783, the first in the collection*, p. 4.



men of erudition\*, for the active philanthropy, and ardent patriotism which alone could support the author's courage in such labours, and for the views of a true statesman who had imbibed from his character and

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\* In the "*Mélanges*" by La Harpe we find an article which, though relating to the "Essay on Despotism," is equally applicable to the "*Lettres de Cachet*," the end and means of execution of which it explains much better than we can do. We therefore transcribe it here, with the more readiness because the work on *Lettres de Cachet* is, in reality, nothing but a development of the "Essay on Despotism."

"That which, in this work, will most strike men capable of attention and reflection, is not the quantity of reading which it supposes, but the choice of studies compared with the author's age.

"Among the numerous quotations with which the pages are charged, there are, no doubt, of eloquence, of poetry, and of literature, quite sufficient for a young man who must naturally delight in works of the imagination. But most of the quotations relate to history and public law. And it was not upon abridgments nor upon extracts made in our own times that he was content to cast a glance. It is evident that he went to the fountain-head and examined leaf by leaf the whole archives of the first ages of the Monarchy, which tire out even the indefatigable patience of the learned, and of writers upon public law—those collections so crude and so discouraging which yield a few valuable discoveries at the cost of so much *ennui*. This did not damp the first vivacity of a young man, who, besides, had all the tastes and passions peculiar to youth. It was also the nature of his work, and the contrast it formed with the author's situation—it was this truly singular mixture, which prepared and showed from afar the man of the revolution.

"From this moment, he had an object which he never lost sight of: he was resolved to confound and unmask those mercenary writers paid to corrupt and pervert historical monuments, and to efface, if possible, all traces of the ancient freedom of the Franks. Alarmed at the progress of philosophy, and at the researches of true science,

genius the vocation which he felt and proved so long beforehand and afterwards so gloriously accomplished.

Two observations naturally occur to the readers of the "Lettres de Cachet," as well as to those of the "Essay on Despotism." The first, relates to the prodigious erudition of the author, who, writing in prison, was necessarily deprived of books, and could refer for the numberless quotations he used, only to his memory, or to notes taken during his very imperfect studies which were constantly undertaken and as

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which combined argument with facts in favour of the rights of nations, the government had imagined those political frauds which call to mind the pious frauds so much lauded in the primitive church. Mirabeau opposed the Moreaus \* the Linguits, the Caveyracs, the Rousseaus and the Mablys. Indignant at this monstrous traffic of lies and corruptions, he feared not to immerse himself in the dust of libraries and the darkness of past ages, to pursue and hunt out the base champions who concealed themselves behind heaps of altered and falsified quotations, as in the fairy tale a knight is represented covered with a diamond buckler, who made all magical enchantments disappear before him. Thus the young combatant, armed with the buckler of truth, attacked and overthrew, when only twenty three years of age, those veteran soldiers of despotism. It was with the statute books of Charlemagne, the collections of Ludwig, Bouquet, and Loisel, and the Norman laws in his hand, that he exposed all the falsehoods of Moreau in his pretended History of France, and all the sophistry of Linguet in his extravagant libels." *La Harpe's "Mélanges inédits de Littérature," collected by J. B. Salgues, Paris, Chaumerot, 1810.*

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\* Mirabeau in pp. 213, 214 of the "Essay on Despotism," has shewn, article by article, and text in hand, the sophistry and falsifications contained in Moreau's work entitled, "Leçons de Morale, de Politique, de Droit Public, puisées dans l'Histoire de notre Monarchie."

often interrupted amid the storms of his youth \*. The other observation relates to the infinite pains taken by the author to establish, not only by the most pressing arguments, but by a multitude of historical records, the illegality of discretionary arrests and detentions, without examination, without prosecution, or trial, or publicity.

Such illegality appears to us incredible at the present time because it has become impossible, thanks to the concessions gained from despotism by the revolution of which the author of the "Lettres de Cachet" was one of the principal leaders. These concessions are

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\* "This is written at the beginning of 1778, and I have been shut up ever since the first months of 1777, with very few books, without public journals, without any correspondence, and deprived of every kind of society. I know nothing therefore of facts subsequent to this period, and I should be obliged to trust wholly to memory if, from a small portion of my papers being restored to me, I had not found a few memoranda and extracts concerning the matter I am treating, collected among the materials for a great work, of which this was to have formed, as it were, only a chapter."—*Lettres de Cachet*, Vol. i. p. 215.

"If I have not done better, it is because such a thing is impossible, both for want of genius, and for want of assistance. It is in the midst of the most erratic and agitated life that I have acquired the little knowledge I possess. I never had a master, and I have no longer an adviser. Separated from my friends, deprived of books, correspondence, quiet, freedom, health—of all indeed except sensibility and leisure, it is impossible to be beset with more difficulties. But, free or not, I will claim with my latest breath the rights of the human species. What moment is better calculated to wage war against despotism than that when one is bearing its chains!"—*Lettres de Cachet*—Introduction, p. 11.

henceforth permanent and indestructible; and the most valuable of them, civil liberty, occupied Mirabeau's mind, as a legislator and political reformer, to a greater extent, because his own sufferings had enabled him to appreciate the benefits of that freedom of which he was so often deprived, and had attached him to a cause which, independently of this, the peculiar nature of his mind would have led him to embrace even amid independence and prosperity.

We shall not say much of the “*Espion Dévalisé* \*” a contemptible rhapsody, even on the admission of Mirabeau himself†. It is a collection in which, with the exception of five, each chapter is a witty narrative, but either frivolous, humorous, or indecent. The only parts of the work worthy of arresting the attention of men of sense and taste, are Chapters II and III, concerning the comptroller-general Silhouette and the Chevalier Turgot, and giving some piquant details concerning the haughty carelessness of Louis XV; Chap. IV, relating to the minister de Baynes, giving some curious facts concerning the duplicity of kings, including the austere Louis XVI, who, notwithstanding, was severe even to harshness; Chapter VI, containing straightforward and judicious advice given to this well-meaning King by his valet de chambre Duret, who well deserved the condescending familiarity of such a master; lastly,

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\* London, 1782, 8vo, 240 pages, with this epigraph: “*Felicitèr audax.*”

† Letters to Vitry, p. 280.

Chapter V., containing a dialogue, evidently fictitious, but full of wit and reason, in which a clever questioner leads Count Maurepas to explain the line of conduct he pursued during seven years with the young monarch, who in his confidence, which was quite filial, had called Maurepas to office, thinking him wise because he was old. This dialogue, in our judgment, gives an excellent and most animated likeness of the octogenarian courtier, whose age had increased instead of correcting his natural levity of disposition, and who, in his excessive selfishness, the only true mark of age upon him, busied himself only in finding means to preserve the enjoyment of power. He took care however to shut his eyes to the approach of events which he foresaw, calculating their effects with regard to the future only in a manner to assure himself that the term of his life, which he accurately anticipated, would place him beyond such effects. He never attempted to take measures against what he expected would happen, nor for the King's safety. He never sought to enlighten the monarch with the true light of politics and government which this unhappy prince was eager to acquire; nor to impart to him what he wanted—a knowledge of mankind, that experience which, according to circumstances, can overcome or tolerate resistance, and more especially that energy of character which can give a King the power, in politics as in every thing else, of surmounting nature or replacing it by a substitute.

Mirabeau never deceived himself concerning this

publication, so unworthy of his name, and which, like two others still more censurable, could only have been written in consequence of his pecuniary distress. Therefore, he took advantage of the want of proof, to disavow these works \*.

We shall conclude what we have to say concerning the “*Espion Dévalisé*” with a further instance of the implacable animosity of the Marquis of Mirabeau.

“Observe that this book, in which he believed he had written but a good story, gives, for the first and perhaps the last time in this world, a recipe for, and indicates the place of action of a poison, slow, inevitable, and imperceptible in its effects, and which leaves no trace †. Weigh this in your mind, my only brother, friend, and supreme counsellor ‡.”

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\* According to our autograph manuscript, Mirabeau did not write a line of chapters x and xviii. The latter contains a long paper, fastidious and often abusive, concerning the *Maitres des Requêtes* and *Intendants*, said to have been supplied by the ex-Intendant Baudouin, one of Mirabeau's fellow-captives. The former chapter is a description of bull-fights in Spain, and was written by M. Danerny, French Consul at Barcelona, who died at Paris in 1807, after a long career of virtue, talents, and services, very little known and but badly rewarded.

† This is an allusion to the details in chapter viii. p. 95 and following, on the composition and effects of a slow poison, supposed to be *Aqua Tophana*, composed of opium and cantharides, and to have been brought from Naples, and used in 1765, to remove the Dauphin, son of Louis XV, and in 1766, to poison the Princess Maria Josepha of Saxony, the Dauphin's widow.

‡ Unpublished letter from the Marquis to the Bailli of Mirabeau, dated February 6th 1785.

The Bailli hastened to repel the hateful insinuation.

“ On the subject of the ‘ Espion Dévalisé’, I have nothing to reply, except that your son swears he wrote only a few chapters which he has shewn to me, and not the narrative in question. I know the name of the writer. As for the recipe which it contains, I heard it mentioned thirty years ago at Naples, but I do not believe in it \*.”

We have also the manuscript of “Memoirs of the Administration of the Duke d’Aiguillon †” the greater

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\* Unpublished letter from the Bailli to the Marquis of Mirabeau, dated February 11th 1783.

The publication of the “Lettres de Cachet” and the “Espion Dévalisé,” made Mirabeau run some risks, although he disavowed one and did not avow the other. We do not think it necessary to give concerning so important a fact the particulars to be found in Vitry, p. 280, and in Peuchet, vol. ii. pp. 127, 128 and 129. But, we must notice a shade of difference, in the letter to Vitry, which proves the estimation in which Mirabeau held his work on *Lettres de Cachet*.

“ This,” he wrote, “ is a different kind of work, and makes, they say, the most enormous sensation . . . .”

Peuchet, who is always in the habit, sometimes for his own ends, and sometimes from negligence, of falsifying all he transcribes, has written “ *the greatest sensation*.”

“ It is added that my name is in everybody’s mouth. I should like to know whether there is any exaggeration in this statement, and likewise what risks this may make me run. At all events the danger in this respect is not unattended with profit; for it is difficult for such a work not to confer some reputation—nevertheless it is a dangerous and dearly bought reputation.”—Letters to Vitry, p. 281.

† “ Mémoires du Ministère du Duc d’Aiguillon, Pair de France, et de son commandement en Bretagne, pour servir à l’Histoire de

part of which was written by Mirabeau. This fact being but little known \*, we are bound to explain it, at the same time that we give an account of the work itself, which is remarkable in many respects.

The contents of the manuscript, which is composed of a pretty long consecutive text, without any division into books, chapters or sections, and of a great number of detached articles, being the parings of the “Espion Dévalisé,” convinces us that Mirabeau did not mean to write a book, but had only collected materials for forming a future and better assorted collection of historical extracts†. The book which has been published is in a different form, that is to say, it has a form, whilst the manuscript has none. The printed volume

la fin du Règne de Louis XV, et à celle du Commencement du Règne de Louis XVI.” Paris: Boisson, 1792. 8vo. A volume of 392 pages.

\* We find it mentioned only in the “Dictionnaire des anonymes et pseudonymes,” by Barbier. Paris: Barrois, 1823. Vol. ii. p. 384, No. 11,589; and in the article “Soulavie” of the “Biographie Ancienne et Moderne.” Paris: Michaud, 1823. Vol. xliii. p. 180.

† This supposition does not appear to us destroyed by the following passage containing the only allusion made by Mirabeau to these memoirs.

“A very interesting work upon a former minister will soon appear. You shall have it at first hand, and you will read it with pleasure.”—*Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Vitry*, p. 27. At this period (August 23d 1781) Mirabeau might have considered as an event about to take place, the speedy publication of this work, of which he gave up the idea soon afterwards when he went to Franche-Comté and thence to Provence.



consists of a series of eleven chapters, and these divisions must have been made up of sutures and fillings-up by Soulavie \*, who, as it is well known, made a practice of fabricating books with documents and materials collected by all sorts of means; falsifying the whole by additions or omissions, and making up works to all appearance homogeneous and authentic, to which he affixed the names of pretended writers who never wrote a line of them, or who, if they did write or contribute any portion, would never have consented to lend their names to such speculations.

These manœuvres, so familiar to Soulavie, are evident in every page of the "Memoirs of the Duke d'Aiguillon." Without examining the manuscript, it is easy to detect the hand of an inattentive and clumsy maker-up, by a sort of chaotic confusion, in which the text is confounded with notes that in the manuscript were separated from it; by the interpolations of the editor, who sometimes states a second time, or else contradicts what, in another place, he has allowed to be asserted by the writer whose work he has falsified; by the want of order in the narrative, which sometimes

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\* Jean Louis Gerard Soulavie, born in 1751, formerly Vicar-general of the diocese of Chalons, afterwards Resident of the French Republic at Geneva, author of several works, editor and finally author of "Memoirs of Marshal the Duke of Richelieu;" also "Historical and Political Memoirs of the Reign of Louis XVI," "Memoirs of Massillon, the Duke of Choiseul, and the Count de Maurepas," editor of St. Simon, &c. He died in March 1813.

leads to the supposition that the work is dated several years subsequent to the period when in some other part it necessarily stops. In a word, we do not hesitate to state that this is a medley got up without reflection, without critical skill, and without any real elaboration, from different heterogeneous materials which would have no connexion in the hand of a real author, but which have been forcibly brought together by the covetous editor with the aid of additions for the most part discordant, and for the purpose of converting a collection of detached fragments, sometimes of detached leaves, picked up anywhere, into a book calculated to excite public curiosity\*.

The reader shall judge of this work from a rapid sketch :—

The first five books contain the history, intermingled with numerous episodes and digressions, of the intrigues of the Duke of Choiseul. This nobleman, from the year 1763, attempted to unite several departments under his control, in order to enjoy the power of prime

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\* Some passages in the manuscript and the first paragraph of the author's remarks (p. 327) would lead to the supposition that the plan had been to give to the work the form of "Memoirs addressed to some prince or nobleman enjoying the Queen's confidence, and to serve as a rule of instruction for this prince's conduct at court." The editor, however, who from time to time returns to this point of view, loses it immediately afterwards; and with the exception of some rare passages, at least in the printed work, everything belies the supposition of such a plan.

minister though the title was refused him. To the particulars of some events of secondary importance, most diffusely narrated, whilst facts of very grave importance are totally omitted, succeeds an account of the death of the Dauphin, son of Louis XV, the strange appearance and disgraceful influence of Madame du Barry, the dismissal of the Duke of Choiseul, the appointment of the Duke d'Aiguillon, the death of Louis XV, the accession of his successor to the throne, and the recal of the parliament. It relates the manœuvres of the Choiseul and Aiguillon parties against each other, the effect of which was the dismissal of both rivals, who, in seeking to exclude each other, lost the chances of success which the grateful affection of the queen held out to the one, and the patronage of an all-influential uncle (the Count de Maurepas), together with some personal feelings on the part of the King, whose father, from hatred to Choiseul, had patronised D'Aiguillon, held out to the other.

The sixth and seventh books, of which there are no traces in our manuscript, and in which the stamp of Mirabeau's mind is nowhere visible, are evidently the work of Soulavie. They contain what he terms an examination of the Duke of Choiseul's administration, but what in reality is a base libel, where, side by side with a number of false statements, malevolent concealments of facts, imaginary pictures, exaggerated prejudice, and blunders of every description for the

most part wilful and calculated, are repeated the absurd and atrocious calumnies which accuse a minister, whom we admit to have been vain and thoughtless, but who was able and firm, honest and patriotic, of having poisoned Madame de Pompadour, the Queen Mary Leszczinska, the Dauphin, the Dauphiness Maria-Josepha of Saxe, &c.

Books VIII, IX, X, and XI, which are not by Mirabeau, but formed of different fragments of his unconnected and badly put together, resume the narrative, which had been interrupted by the interpolations of Books VI and VII. The work now relates, in terms sometimes of praise, sometimes of bitterness, and often distorts, the different services of the Duke d'Aiguillon, and the institution, vicissitudes and enterprises of the parliament. It points out the dangers which threaten the monarchy; the attempts already made to destroy the popularity of the Queen; the line of conduct which she ought to pursue, in order to disconnect herself from the political movement to which her advisers are imprudently driving her; the advantages to be gained by her assuming the direction of a general system of improvement combining useful economy with useful expenditure, which would form a department for her suitable to her sex, her age, and her rank, and in which she would assume the management of general acts of benevolence, the guardianship of charitable institutions, the patronage of the fine

arts, and thereby regain the affection and confidence of the nation.

Among these counsels, given without much order, in Books X and XI. are two articles, the more singular and remarkable because they contain the principles somewhat developed, of a system to which we shall have occasion to revert on reaching the period when Mirabeau, being called to the assistance of the sinking monarchy, consented to league himself with it against anarchy, and sought to obtain a fulcrum in the co-operation of the Queen, whose influence he appreciated, and was anxious to render useful.

We shall here dwell a little upon this part of the work, not for the purpose of defending the incoherence of inserting a plan for directing public works, in a memoir of the Duke d'Aiguillon, formerly in charge of the department of foreign affairs, and who for seven years past had been wholly out of office, and could not therefore have been minister when the work was published, — but to call the reader's attention to the singular fact that Mirabeau, in his prison\*, his mind

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\* The manuscript we have bears no date; but we have every reason to believe that it was written, or at least begun, at Vincennes; and completed many years before its publication, which took place in 1792. Several circumstances lead us to this conviction, and, among others, pages 61, 195, 262, and 307 of the printed work, which prove that the book, or at least the chapters to which they belong, were written during the lifetime of the minister Turgot, the Count de Maurepas, the architect Soufflot, and Archbishop Aponch, all of whom died in 1781 and 1782.

being constantly directed to public affairs, assumed the office of state councillor, and at the same time invested himself with a species of edileship by seeking methodically for the most judicious means of improving the salubrity of the metropolis and beautifying it, although he had never resided in it except as a traveller and during a short period, and was scarcely acquainted with its localities.

Thus in promising the Queen that “if she assumed the direction of these improvements, she would acquire a right to immortality and become the idol of the Parisians and of all France\*,” Mirabeau reminds her that the Dauphin, father of Louis XVI, intended, on his accession to the throne, to fix his residence at Paris,—an event which, by abandoning Versailles, would have produced an incalculable saving of expenditure; and

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\* P. 257. This sentence is copied literally from the printed book. We here give a few additional lines which exist in our manuscript, and which Soulavie either has not used, or did not obtain.

“I repeat that the honour and interest of this amiable Princess, strenuously urge her to trample under foot all intrigues, all hatred, all vengeance, and to incline towards an object in which she will find the only advantages, and the only glory to which she ought to attach any importance. Let her leave the cares of the government to those able to bear their weight; let her assume the charge of the department of fine arts—she is their natural protectress, inasmuch as the King has no taste for them. The Queen, on the contrary, loves them, and may be indebted to them for her sweetest pleasures for the celebrity most flattering to her, and for the popularity of which her good sense renders her ambitious.”

that the Prince likewise intended to carry into execution a number of new works, the idea of which the author adopts, adding his own views on the subject.

He recommends first that the great gallery of the Louvre should be finished; and that, when complete, it should be adorned with the King's pictures, "cubically piled up in the depot at Versailles\* ; and it would then form a Museum preferable to all those of Italy†."

He next proposes to build a parallel gallery, so as to complete the junction between the Louvre and the Tuileries. Here should be placed the royal library, an establishment the improvement of which, he states to be more and more necessary and which he points out the means of effecting‡.

He further demands the execution of a plan for giving to the parish of St. Marguerite an ancient Basilic, a species of edifice which, he says, "does not exist in Christendom§, but with which it behoves us to enrich our modern arts;" for all the decorations of our churches are inside. Why should they not be outside? The interior ought to be sufficiently adorned for the worship of the Divinity; but the exterior embellishes the city||.

He proposes great and healthy openings, such as have since been effected from the Place Vendôme to the Boulevards¶, and another projected since the

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\* P. 247.

† P. 246.

‡ P. 249 to 255.

§ P. 310.

|| P. 311.

¶ P. 258.

Revolution, provided for even by reserves made in the sale of the crown lands, but which, nevertheless, has not yet been carried into execution: we allude to the opening of a street, upon the axis of the Pantheon (then St. Geneviève) which should extend to the Luxembourg\*. On this occasion he offers a tribute of praise to the memory of the architect Soufflot who died August 29th 1781, at the moment when the author announced the vast projects which this celebrated architect proposed to execute.

The author calls for† the erection of two great bridges, one facing the Hotel des Invalides, the other facing the Jardin du Roi; the removal of the buildings still remaining upon several of the bridges within the city‡, also the removal of the Hotel Dieu and the destruction of its dependencies which conceal the river and break the line of quays§; the formation in the street of foot-pavements||; “the materials for making which are abundant in France, which, between Dunkerque and Nantes, contains four hundred leagues of coast, consisting of granite rock¶.” He pleads strongly for a popular benefit which at a later period long occupied his mind\*\*. “Paris,” says he, “has no water. How is it that this idea does not stimulate the minds of those who, in an instant, can give a powerful impulse? The

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\* P. 262. † P. 262. ‡ P. 299. § P. 297. || P. 267. ¶ P. 276.

\*\* Farther on we shall have occasion to notice Mirabeau's writings upon the “Waters of Paris.”



aqueducts at Rome supply that city with five hundred thousand hogsheads of water ; Lyons has eighty-three thousand from gutters and arcades ; Limoges has numberless works of this description ; and what was Limoges to the Romans \* ?” He recommends the plan of Deparcieux, who offered to bring to Paris the waters of the Yvette and also those of the Eure, by making use of the works erected by Louis XIV at Maintenon, and abandoned by that monarch after a frightful expenditure of men and money †. He proposes adopting the custom of the Romans, and employing in public works those troops whose health and condition would be improved by it without any detriment to discipline ; “ for the soldier bent towards the earth, and inured to rustic labour, would raise himself up all the better when facing the enemy ‡ ;” but as only a temporary and limited assistance could be obtained from the troops so employed, he observes that all the laborious population would be glad to assist in such works, too useful for the expense to be regretted ; “ for no doubt it is much better to pay architects, sculptors, painters, and workmen, than courtesans §.”

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\* P. 293.

† P. 293 to 297.

‡ P. 285.

§ Page 246. Mirabeau's notions, partly borrowed from other philanthropists, suggested notions to Soulavie, who has added to Book XI, in his own name, an article proposing many improvements which have since taken place : such as the opening of streets and squares, by pulling down the churches of St. Honoré, St. Sauveur, and St. Victor, the seminary of St. Sulpice, the convent of St. Victor,

“ But,” he goes on to say, “ it is not sufficient to give work to the able-bodied poor, we must also think of those who are unable to work. Here more especially the Queen can and ought to interfere. There are kinds of good to be done that are not expensive, and which fall more directly upon the spot where want exists. When the royal family bestow alms, they charge the lieutenant of police to distribute them, and he knows the wants of the population only through the commissaries of the different *quartiers*. The true indigent of the metropolis are those who are not seen. It is a proud poverty, which devours good families whom misfortune deprives of even the power of complaining, and who cannot be relieved because this being known would be to them the greatest of misfortunes. In isolated garrets, are to be found wretched families suffering under unexpected reverses, atrocious calumnies, base treachery, and all the cruel sports of fortune. Can it be supposed the commissaries of the *quartiers* ever enter these labyrinths of grief? . . . These mercenary men, sold to favour, to caprice, to the wickedness of the rich, and, above all, to the man of the police, make him such reports only as coincide with his own views. Connected by profession with the lawyers,

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the fairs of St. Germain, the convent of gray friars opposite the new Ecole de Médecine, the opening of the great avenue between the Luxembourg and the Observatoire, and the junction of the Rue de Seine and the Rue de Tournon. Pp. 271 to 284.

incorporated among the menials of the courts of justice, ramping before the magistrates of the Chatelet, corrupters or corrupt, a whirlwind of cares, business, projects, hopes, and amusement, carries them away from the abode of sorrow. They know not, or they forget the misfortunes which surround them ; and if chance should cause an unfortunate person to be distinguished from the crowd, it is often to add a personal misfortune to the ills already endured. To the kind parish priests is it left to console these poor sufferers, condemned to drag on their painful life amid suffering and want ! I have seen the Curé of St. Eustache, and several others, ascend to a fifth story, in the middle of winter, to console the indigent and relieve their necessities. To these worthy depositaries ought to be entrusted the alms so erroneously and improperly distributed. The assistance would then reach the source of want, and the respectable poor would be a hundred times more pleased at receiving relief from their spiritual pastors than through the ministerial agency of the police.

I mention the Curé of St. Eustache, because he is in communication with the royal family. Many others are equally deserving of mention. But if I speak only of Paris, because at court nothing is spoken of but Paris, it is not less true that the wants of this city are the least urgent of any, and that as much care must be taken not to create new paupers as to relieve those who already exist. With regard to the latter, it would be

at least necessary to give to all the parish priests in the kingdom a sufficient income to live; for they will not aid your poor if they are themselves in poverty. The Curés, in some provinces, in Brittany for instance, have scarcely three hundred livres \* a year. What necessity is there for the Archbishop of Auch to have 500,000 livres a year? Not but he makes a good use of it. Archbishop Apchon † is one of the most respectable prelates in the kingdom, but he is mortal. The diocess of Cambrai has not always had a Fenelon. When shall a portion of these enormous revenues be taken and distributed among all the Curés in the kingdom? Madame Louise ‡ has just obtained 30,000 livres a year in corn and land, to be taken from the abbey of St. Germain, for the support of the Carmelites of the kingdom. Assuredly corn would grow equally well, if there were no Carmelites in France. But 30,000 livres a year, distributed among the poor Curés of the kingdom, would suffice to give, in a year of dearth, the indispensably necessary to a great number of honest poor §."

We extract from Mirabeau's manuscript another piece of advice, which has not been published by Soulavie.

"It is more than time to finish this long and shape-

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\* About £12. Tr.

† Claude Marc Antoine d'Apchon, first a soldier, then Bishop of Dijon and Archbishop of Auch, died at Paris in 1782. It is well known that this prelate signalised himself at Auch by a remarkable act of courage and humanity.

‡ The Princess Louise, daughter of Louis XV, a nun in the royal abbey of St. Denis.

§ Pp. 304 to 307.

less collection of all sorts of dreams. You know my principles and opinions sufficiently well to have no doubt that I have made a great sacrifice to etiquette, to habit, and to prejudice, by fixing your view upon the metropolis alone. The rest of the kingdom is a stranger land to the great, which is the worst of evils. I wished to show you how many useful and great things you did not do, even in the place where you constantly reside. But would not travelling amuse your illustrious friend?—or her royal husband, who, if he remain at Versailles, will never complete his education either as a man or as a King? What a sad existence is that of sovereigns! They are shut up within a circle of forty leagues in diameter, the radii of which they perambulate as if by a constant oscillation. The active correspondence between the King of Spain and Louis XV, during twenty years, is curious. They wrote to each other every day, in the same terms. The King of Spain wrote:—‘At five o’clock I left St. Ildefonso, and the rendezvous for the chase was at the Round of St. Anthony.’ The same day Louis XV wrote from Versailles:—‘At ten o’clock I went to the Carrefour des Rossignols, at Compiègne, &c.’ And this went on during twenty years. Each monarch had his map, and followed the route of the other, as if they had been learned geographers studying Cook’s voyages!

“Let the Queen imitate her brother’s example\* ;

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\* Joseph II travelled a great deal, and visited France in 1777 and 1781.

let her travel, and excite her husband to travel likewise, without pomp—for pomp tends only to ruin, tire, and deceive. Let her travel . . . . Alas! very near the spot where the ostentation of wealth and luxury insults the misery of the people, the King and Queen will see, learn, and feel that which ministers and courtiers never tell them!”

After this judicious advice, Mirabeau gives a series of demonstrations which Soulavie has not inserted. He indicates some of the improvements of all descriptions required in the provinces, and which would be rapidly carried into effect if any appearance of royal solicitude, any well-timed encouragement were employed to stimulate the intelligent and laborious classes, give an impetus to industry, and a free range to the spirit of speculation and improvement which resorts to new means, and attempts useful application. The author alludes principally to the wants of agriculture. To illustrate his arguments by example, he mentions Brittany—backward, poor, and uncultivated. He recommends that the government should, in the first place, give life to this province, by making roads to facilitate a passage from it to other parts of the kingdom; to allow its neighbours to enter it, and its inhabitants to leave it. He recommends that its immense heaths should be turned to profitable use, and their borders parcelled out and divided among the poorer inhabitants. He especially urges that large tracts of land should be cleared.

“The wealth of a country,” he says, “consists solely in its agriculture. From it the population, and consequently the strength of a state, are derived. Colbert, to whom so many just reproaches may be made, was wrongfully accused when it was stated that he concerned himself about nothing but manufactories. It must be admitted that he rendered several ordinances favourable to agriculture. One of the most celebrated, promulgated the year before his death, and rendered in favour of Alsace, provides that ‘all persons who will occupy vain and vague lands may cultivate them to their own profit, and use them in full property.’ Colbert, just before he died, contemplated making this ordinance general throughout the kingdom; for he perceived what is very evident, that the King has a full quarter of his kingdom to conquer from enemies termed heaths, downs, and so forth; and that it is necessary to plough with one hand whilst the other prunes, in order soon after to cut down the parasitical and voracious tree of fiscality.”

The author, seeing the immensity of such an undertaking as clearing these waste lands, offers, for its execution, a plan which no one else would have imagined, especially at the period when he wrote.

“Conventicles of monks,” says he, “should be established in the most uncultivated parts of the kingdom, to do there that which they did a thousand years ago in different places. Monks can be useful to society in no other way. These conventicles must be

dispersed in the most barren spots, according to the system of the primitive church, and there supported, during the time necessary, by the profits of the newly-cultivated lands, which might afterwards be added to the mass of ecclesiastical property in the kingdom. By such means the monks would be usefully employed, the waste lands put into cultivation, the state enriched, and no one would have a right to complain."

"But," he again observes, "not only must the lands be cultivated but the inhabitants likewise. And why should not a former measure be adopted which time has justified?"

"In 1769, *married* men announcing a decided capacity for a trade, were selected from different families, and sent to Paris for a year. The circumstance of these men being married was considered a security for their return. Thus, the farrier was sent to Alfort, under Bourgelat\*, the miller to Corbeil, the mason to St. Geneviève, the carpenter among the machinery at the opera, and the gardener to Montreuil. Each of these men, on his return, gained what he pleased; and they are now sent for from a distance of ten leagues round. It would be very useful if pupils were placed, in the same manner, under skilful agriculturists. Each would take back to his native place not only the tools proper for his calling, but

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\* Claude Bourgelat, a celebrated and learned veterinary practitioner, who was born in 1712, and died in 1779.



that knowledge which, being multiplied at the centre will never reach the circumference, unless a zealous, active, and persevering government uses all possible means to overcome indifference and routine."

At the end of these plans of improvement, Mirabeau, to make their utility more evident, compares, in a scientific and ingenious manner, the ignorant and imperfect state of agriculture, not only of first ages of civilisation, but during the recess of Louis XIV, with the daily increasing skill displayed in modern agriculture; adducing a multitude of facts as conclusive as they are interesting, but which we cannot here insert, without carrying to a still greater length this already over-long digression.

Among the other works written by Mirabeau in the Donjon of Vincennes and which have remained unpublished, we must make a passing allusion to the "Dialogues" already mentioned. In these, the author gives a fervid and glowing account of the circumstances which led to his introduction to the Marquis of Monnier, and of the beginning and progress of a passion for a time single and silent, then mutual, energetic, and rash. After these "Dialogues," which ought to be forgotten, we may mention, on account of its connexion with them, another work entitled "Memoirs of Sophie," a simple and affecting narrative written by the Marchioness of Monnier, of which Mirabeau,

who had asked for and corrected it, speaks several times in the Vincennes correspondence, and also in his letters to Vitry\*.

Lastly, we must also mention, 1st, a very learned dissertation upon "Inoculation of the Small-pox," written by Mirabeau at Vincennes. This was a work of considerable labour and patience, undertaken from paternal love. It is often alluded to in the Letters from Vincennes†, because Mirabeau intended the work for Sophie, who was opposed to the inoculation of their child; 2ndly, an incomplete translation of Tacitus, but with the life of Agricola complete. Of this translation Mirabeau speaks with but little confidence‡.

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\* Letters from Vincennes, vol. i. p. 81; vol. iii. pp. 154, 184, 231, 248, &c. Letters to Vitry, p. 38.

† Letters from Vincennes, vol. i. p. 215; vol. ii. pp. 412, 413, 433; vol. iii. pp. 148, 260, 375, 429, 439, 460, 508, 552, 594; vol. iv. pp. 73, 77, 142, 155, 202, 331, &c. This dissertation is also mentioned in the letters to Vitry, pp. 6, 10.

‡ Letters from Vincennes, vol. iii. p. 269; vol. iv. p. 15. The Marquis of Mirabeau mentions it in one of his letters:

"This gentleman, in prison, is translating Tacitus, as I am informed; for he writes incessantly. This author was the study of his great-grandfather (Honorius Marquis of Mirabeau) during the six years that he spent at Mirabeau."—*Unpublished letter from the Marquis to the Bailli of Mirabeau, dated July 6th 1779.*

Mirabeau had conceived, but had not time to accomplish, the plan of a very important work upon history:

"Think you, my dear friend, that M. Le Noir would accept the dedication of a translation of Tacitus, to which I should dare to affix

It was his intention to revise it ; and, to confess the truth, it is not quite worthy of either the original author or the translator. 3rdly, “Considerations on Toleration\*,” a very extensive work, and full of bold and energetic views. 4th. The beginning of a prose translation of the *Epopée* of Silius Italicus. 5th. “Historical and Philosophical Views concerning Islamism.” 6th. A compilation concerning the history of the Gatinais, and of the town of Gien†. 7th. Another vast compilation on the Revolutions of the United Provinces, from the irruption of the Cimbri and the Teutones to the middle of the fifteenth century. Several of these works, of which we have the auto-

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supplements of my own in lieu of all that is lost, besides a great number of notes and dissertations ? This extensive work, to which I am devoting the little talents I possess and the whole of my attention, is not near finished (although the rough draught of the translation is), nor can it be whilst I am in this place, for I am unable to obtain the different books to which I must refer. But this mark of respect shall be made not quite unworthy of a man whom I shall always feel a delight in calling my benefactor.”—*Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Boucher, dated June 3rd 1779.*

This title of benefactor was publicly given by Mirabeau to M. Le Noir on the publication of the “*Lettres de Cachet*.” The following is the first sentence of the notice at the beginning of the second part :—

“M. Le Noir is my benefactor ; and I state it beforehand to those who may read this second part.”

\* Letters from Vincennes, vol. ii. p. 107.

† This manuscript, of which Sophie had been requested to collect the materials, is in her handwriting.

graph manuscripts, are, at least in part, in a fit state for publication. Hereafter we shall dwell upon them at greater length ; omitting, however, all that might gratify a frivolous or immoral curiosity, to which we will never make the least concession. We shall, at some future time, publish all that appears worthy of being laid before the public, and likely to sustain, if they do not increase, the author's reputation.

## BOOK II.

THE reader has seen, in Book XII Vol. II, that, after the compromise at Pontarlier, Mirabeau deferred his journey to Provence and went to Switzerland, where he remained about three months. His principal motive for going thither was to dispose of two of his manuscripts — the “Lettres de Cachet” and the “Espion Devalisé,” the sale of which he required to relieve his necessities. Another cause prolonged his stay there.

Having the public advantage always in view, he had carefully examined, as he travelled on, the system of custom-houses established by two neighbouring countries, the frontiers of which he was under the necessity of crossing and re-crossing. He considered the practice of restriction and prohibition, which then prevailed, to be prejudicial to the industry and commerce of France. Besides his general views concerning the freedom and independence of nations, he had adopted, with reference to custom-house dues, principles which

time and the revolution have, to a certain extent, accredited among us, but which, in other respects, appear new and hazardous, although in England they have lately been adopted, and are now in practice.

Mirabeau accordingly wrote a paper on this subject, addressed to Joly de Fleury, the Comptroller General, who was a kinsman of his mother's. We have the autograph production, but do not insert it here because it would lead us to too great a length, and we shall have occasion to mention it again in our account of the author's legislative labours. Besides, we feel bound to insert, in preference, another paper, also unpublished and in Mirabeau's hand-writing, because it displays him in his true character as a political man and a defender of oppressed nations.

Led accidentally into Switzerland, he could not behold without emotion and sympathy the state in which Geneva then was. This state so insignificant in territory, had nevertheless acquired considerable importance from the peculiar genius of its inhabitants, its geographical situation between France and Savoy, the usurping pretensions of the latter power, and the political connexion by which it had always secured the protection of the former.

It was to solicit that this protection, which had lately been partial and oppressive, should become generous and tutelary, that Mirabeau took the step of which we are about to give an account.

Very warm dissensions had recently burst forth in this small but unruly republic. There was an open collision betwixt the aristocratic body, holding the executive power, and the representatives, who complained that they were tyrannised over by the nobles, and were weary of the illusions of a system in which, though legally free, they were *de facto* slaves. The King of France had interfered, and sent troops demanded by the aristocracy. The representatives had been put down; many of them had fled; great numbers from the industrious classes were preparing to emigrate, and Geneva appeared on the eve of complete dissolution.

These circumstances forcibly struck Mirabeau, disposed as he always was, to make every public cause his own; and he conceived the idea of applying personally to the French government, and urging measures calculated to preserve Geneva from the threatened danger, and restore her to order and peace. At the period of his appeal at Pontarlier, he had had some correspondence with M. de Vergennes, who was a native of Burgundy, and was related to the Ruffey family. The following is the letter or statement which Mirabeau addressed, October 4th 1782, to that minister, whose policy was as prudent and able, as it was firm and generous\*.

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\* This letter is mentioned in Vitry's Collection, pp. 253, 256.

“ MONSIEUR LE COMTE,

“ Forced by the circumstance which I had the honour to explain to you in my letter of the 4th of November last, to set out for Provence, I will hastily state my opinion of the affairs of Geneva with the freedom due from a friend of truth, to mankind, and to himself. I am persuaded that by stating it to you, on this occasion, wholly and without disguise, I am fulfilling a duty to my country, to my sovereign and to yourself, whose good intentions and talents I honoured long before you had acquired a right to my gratitude.

“ You are aware that the affairs of Geneva have generally and deeply occupied all persons connected with Switzerland. I have therefore, during my residence at Neufchâtel, heard much of the hopes, fears and plans of the Genevese citizens who have incurred the displeasure of the French government. I shall not conceal from you that I have sought out several of these citizens, known by the name of Representatives, and, have seen them, sufficiently often, listened to them with sufficient attention, and observed them with sufficient care to discover their feelings, and make myself acquainted with the condition of their affairs.

“ You know better than I do that the industry, spirit of calculation, and activity universally granted to these people—their morals, their economy, their skill, and their success are celebrated throughout Europe; and you will easily believe that the Repre-



sentatives, and more especially their leaders, who were banished from Geneva the moment the French troops entered that city, are not ignorant of this. Fortunately, they all cast a look of affection and regret towards their country; and, so long as they have any hope of returning to it with honour and security, I doubt their pursuing the plans of settlement elsewhere, which other nations vie with each other in holding out to them.

“I know and have proof that the sovereigns throughout Europe entertain hopes that a considerable emigration of Genevese will take place, and are endeavouring to excite it. The Elector Palatine has made the most tempting offers to the Genevese, and when I state that he has done so, I mean to say, that they have in fact received, but not accepted, such offers. All the advances came from himself, and he did not disdain to leave them absolute masters of the conditions, and to promise them every guarantee they might require to insure the stability of their settlement in one of the most beautiful countries in Europe, blessed with one of the mildest governments.

“Several Princes of the Germanic body, of less importance I must admit, but more tempting from that very reason, as being more interested in obtaining a valuable colony, and less exposed to participate in the quarrels of the great powers, are also eager to take advantage of the precarious situation of the demo-

eratic party at Geneva; and attempt to make the Representatives believe that their country is lost to them, and their case hopeless. All offer them indemnities, a Genevese constitution, buildings, lands, and advances of capital.

“ The Landgrave of Hesse Homburg, among others, well known for his prudence and the pious policy of his ancestor, who welcomed, courted, protected, and maintained the French driven from their homes by the revocation of the edict of Nantes, offers them a delightful asylum in Wetteravia, which, being near Frankfort, the principal mart in Europe, is the proper place for a depôt of watches, and clocks which are wanting throughout the North, now obliged to send to Geneva, for the productions of the watchmaker’s art which is a source of such extraordinary prosperity to the countries in which it is cultivated.

“ The King of Prussia has not been the last to enter into the same views. In the interest of France, if the principality of Neufchâtel is never to belong to her, and if, as I believe, she is really interested in the prosperity of Geneva, I sincerely hope no one will give the King of Prussia the idea of cantonising the Genevese upon the species of promontory situated in the territory of Neufchâtel and called the Vawer, where the smallest colony, seated upon the river Thiele, already navigable and capable of being rendered more so, surrounded by the lakes of Bienne, Morat, and Neufchâtel, would become one of

the most flourishing commercial entrepôts in the universe, and would soon drive old Geneva into oblivion. Favoured as this city is by nature, it does not possess any thing like the advantages of the situation I have described, which is the best in Europe. But as hitherto Frederick has not appeared to wish the Genevese to settle anywhere but in his hereditary dominions, the harshness of the climate and an entirely military government probably constitute a sufficient preservative against any slight temptation.

“ The temptation which appears to me difficult for the Genevese to resist, if they do not find honour and security at home, is the offer of the English. I can affirm to you, with a degree of certainty to which some confidence is due, that the English government is at present seriously devising means to draw the Genevese in great numbers to the British islands. I say the British islands, because, if they wish to become colonists, Ireland, with a mild climate, less hot and less cold than Geneva, offers them noble estates in the country hitherto the worst cultivated and the wildest in Europe, but certainly the most fertile and the best situated for trade. Now, you know that the constitution which formerly rendered success of this nature impossible to the Irish, has been much modified, and seems likely to be modified still more.

“ Let me go further : it would be absurd to deny that Ireland is becoming the most free of any country

in the world, and the most desirable for men who feel the value of freedom. The Genevese will there find the same spirit of political equality which they are anxious to preserve in their own country. They will there find a people united, associated, and disciplined, who will guarantee their liberties with their own. They will there find immense rights which this confederacy has obtained from Great Britain with reference to the trade of Ireland; the duties so moderate that they are scarcely felt; no excise; the produce of the soil at a price most favourable to manual industry; no corporate bodies of tradesmen, no regulating system, no police oppression. They will there find a parliament whose independence has been solemnly acknowledged, and which has just decreed that every foreigner who settles in Ireland, and takes the oath of allegiance, shall not only be naturalized but become an Irishman to all intents and purposes, as well with reference to entire freedom of trade as to political rights—with the sole exception of not being eligible to sit in either house of parliament, or in the King's privy council, or to hold any great office under the crown.

“Ireland will thus be more favourable to the Genevese than their own country ever was. And if the workmen of Geneva prefer transplanting to England the principal branch of their industry and of their prosperity, I mean watchmaking, Great Britain, which is far from having reached the same perfection in this art,

will joyfully give them establishments. Similarity of religion, uniformity of principles, and the good fortune of finding, in an adopted country, civil liberty more precisely determined and more firmly established than they ever found it even at Geneva—these, together with the advantage of being incorporated with a rich and calculating nation which will not refuse them, if they require it, a considerable advance of capital, are very powerful motives to induce the Genevese to settle in England.

“ I doubt not a moment that if the Representatives continue to perceive that they are accounted as nothing in the state of which they form the most numerous class—that if their chiefs remain under the ban of proscription—that if the protection of surrounding states, especially your own, seems always exclusively bestowed upon the aristocracy who, after all, cannot pretend to be blameless, and whose deep and implacable hatred, and slow-coming revenge, are justly to be dreaded,— I have not the least doubt, I say, that a Genevese colony will be formed in England, and that, though at first weak and unambitious of being more numerous at the outset, it will soon form a nucleus for the discontented, for all citizens driven away by aristocratic pride,—in a word, for all the wise men of the state ;—for wise men will prefer becoming the privileged subjects of a great sovereign, to remaining the disgraced and humiliated subjects of their equals. This

colony will be one of patriots, and to it will alternately be added all those who, being equally opposed to the violence to which the democratic party has been driven, and to the system of oppression which the Genevese will never be persuaded has not been invented by their magistrates, prefer a thousand times to their own pretended republic, a simply *municipal* city without that vain independence, that mock sovereignty which has ruined Geneva. In fact, the citizens of Geneva will always consider this silly and lying institution of theirs to be nothing but a board of tyrants, the more formidable from the facility with which they can deceive a great minister and a great monarch, unable to cast but a very imperfect glance upon the affairs of this little city and its whimsical government. Thus, the rulers of Geneva add to the fears of the people by making their most august protectors appear objects of dread.

“ For, let me tell you, if the Genevese, any more than the rest of the world, cannot depend upon ministers always just, and enlightened, and sufficiently well informed, or upon clerks incapable of deceiving those ministers, they have more to fear from such protection, from such judges of their happiness, than Asiatic slaves from their despots. Even in the East, there are rules and customs which are strictly observed to a certain extent, whilst here, the caprice of subordinates or a mistake of ministers may be the only code of laws for petty republicans so dependent as these are upon their neighbours.

“If the Genevese should determine upon emigrating) to which assuredly you would not drive them, how, I venture to ask, could you prevent them from effecting their purpose? Would you employ violence? Your generous heart would never consent to this; besides you well know how insufficient violence would be, and how directly contrary to your own views, whether from the invincible attraction which all defence gives to the human mind towards the thing defended, or from rendering the persecuted more interesting, as their first merit would always be that they are persecuted. And who would not consider equally hateful and alarming, measures for preventing the emigration of a people said to be independent, and whose political existence you had forcibly altered? Who would not claim for this people the liberty at least of withdrawing from the most painful recollections?

“But do not deceive yourself: the Genevese who are now oppressed constitute that portion of their nation which is the most esteemed in Europe. It is in this class—and no foreigner doubts it—that are to be found the most industry, morality, and even moderation. This, you will say, appears very contrary to fact; but it is not so. Believe the word of a man who respects you too much either to flatter or to deceive you. The troubles at Geneva have not originated in the party that has been so sacrificed: they are a masterpiece of Machiavelism of the other party. I here engage to prove this to you in the clearest manner, if you will

only condescend to listen to me ; and to show you distinctly that if the Representatives had been less honest, more indifferent to the choice of means, more opulent, more favourably represented to you, better informed concerning events and the measures taken by their enemies and their neighbours, the aristocrats would not have triumphed. This discussion would however carry me too far. Allow me only to remind you of and explain to you an anecdote relating to yourself, which will show you what unworthy manœuvres, what means of all descriptions have been lately resorted to by the enemies of the Representatives.

“In March 1781, a base libel upon the affairs of Geneva was privately circulated at Paris. In this production, an attempt was made by the writer to wound your self-love, without reflecting that a man like you is, and ought to be, above such things, and to the meanness of allowing them to influence in the slightest degree his plans as a statesman. I have read this libel, and I also know, from one of your trusty subordinates, that it was represented to you as the work of the Representatives, and as a plot disclosed by the zeal of the Negatives.

“ Now, those to whom the most influence has been ascribed in the party of the Representatives, and against whom an attempt has been made to excite in your mind the strongest prejudice—I allude to Messrs. Clavière and Duroverai—offer you their lives, if any body can prove that a single line, or a single word personally



offensive to you, ever came from the pen of a Representative. I am convinced of their sincerity, because I possess the most conclusive evidence that the aristocrats have either among themselves or in their pay, men employed in inventing calumnies and propagating them in foreign countries. Thus, it is pretty clear that the libel, of which I have here reminded you was written by the negatives in order that it might be attributed to the representatives. This is an abominable but a worn-out snare. And yet its effects seldom fail with the great, whose knowledge never prevents them from being basely deceived,—because the height from which they look, at their fellow-men, is too inaccessible to truth, which like virtue is simple, modest, and obscure.

“ But let us return to subjects more worthy of your attention than such vile, anonymous productions.

“ Every thing leads me to believe that the Genevese are preparing to emigrate. The fact will be denied to you, or at least you will be told that it is improbable. You will be told that the mildness, the well-known, moderation of the Genevese, the attachment which it is impossible not to suppose the mechanics feel to their workshops, as the natural rendezvous of those who seek the productions of their art in the only country where it is truly honoured, do not warrant the belief in emigration, nor a doubt that the Genevese will readily bend their necks to the yoke, if firmness and perseverance be shown.

“ You will be misinformed, and you will be imposed upon the more successfully, because several difficulties in the details may occur to delay the execution of the plan of emigration. I trust however that you will think, when all these fine things are told you, that what I have the honour to state to you is founded upon the most certain information and upon undoubted evidence. Do not lose sight of this fact, that the aristocrats have the greatest interest in this emigration taking place, because it would weaken and ultimately destroy at Geneva the party which has been striving against them for a century past. Be assured, likewise, that although it is very difficult for the Genevese to sever the bonds that link them to their native soil, and the negotiations of the power that would entice them to its dominions cannot therefore be immediately successful, it is impossible that Geneva can avoid being ultimately depopulated of all that gives her life, of all that feeds her industry. When the citizens and inhabitants are irritated each day by the appearance of an aristocracy necessarily insolent and oppressive, considering the narrow limits to which its movements and pretensions are confined—when they feel that they have no power to check this aristocracy, no rampart to defend themselves against it;—when they are imbued with the degrading and painful conviction that no description of merit, or talent can entitle them to consideration—that to obtain any degree of credit, it

is necessary to flatter the league of the wealthy, and enrol themselves among the protégés of the latter,—be assured that they will not cease wishing for another order of things, and will eagerly seek another country; that they will leave the aristocrats to dispute precedence with each other in old Geneva, which will then be deserted, impoverished, and degraded; and that the slightest nucleus formed to entice them to any country in which each can enjoy his own energy, will suffice to determine the majority of the rising generation to emigrate and transplant from Geneva all that is interesting to her neighbours.

“ When I say, ‘to any country,’ pray observe that the most absolute government would not hurt their self-love, nor discountenance their emulation to so great a degree as an exclusive aristocracy without counterpoise or rivalry. Even in monarchies, the most lowly subject finds no legal obstacle to his advancement in life. There are difficulties, it is true, but no impossibility that the highest ambition he can without madness conceive, shall be ultimately realised. Hope continually feeds his energy, if nature has given him any. How many valuable individuals, how many instruments of her honour and fame would France have lost, if at the head of the state there existed an aristocratic body which, not only by name but also by right, formed an impenetrable barrier between the throne and the people.

“I repeat that the inhabitants of Geneva are preparing to emigrate. It is evident that all the neighbouring powers are interested in such an event; because, if Geneva were only an entrepôt of trade for Lyons and the south of France with Switzerland and Italy and a great part of Germany, it would still remain a very important city. But Geneva was the original source of the trade and manufactories which have rendered Switzerland so flourishing. It likewise fertilises the stony soil of Savoy, conveys thither the small quantity of specie that circulates there, employs the Savoyard day-labourers, and lastly, shares its abundance with that country, the most disinherited in Europe. Geneva exercises a similar influence over the French provinces in its neighbourhood. France, to which this rich city lent a hundred millions of livres during M. Necker’s administration, derives greater benefit than any other power from the industry of this little state. Independently of the consideration that Geneva is the only military station, already fortified, which covers the kingdom from the Rhone to the Mediterranean, and defends the passage of the river, it appears beyond a question that every thing France can desire in this extremity of its dominions is, that Geneva should always remain populous and industrious, because without the aid of the Genevese, all the circumjacent country within a radius of ten leagues, would be wretched, deserted, and unknown; be-

cause trade alone may give life to a territory the soil of which is sterile, and in which agriculture can supply the wants of only a small number of inhabitants; and lastly, because no one is any longer ignorant, or has any doubt, that in a spot where nature has not herself placed commerce, freedom alone can create it. France would feel bitter regret if her natural rivals were enriched by the trade and industry of Geneva. The wounds, still recent and now generally known, which were inflicted upon us by the revocation of the edict of Nantes, have opened the eyes of the whole nation to the fatal consequences of emigrations from Geneva; and, I repeat, it is no longer in the power of the masters of the earth to prevent these emigrations by any other means than by a prosperous government,—that is to say, mild, prudent, and friendly to general freedom.

“Are there two means of rendering the government of Geneva such? I think not. Whatever measures of pacification you may have imagined in your wisdom, you cannot but perceive that as they have been preceded by an act of severity, they will be scrupulously examined by all whom they affect.

“The new laws imposed upon the republic (for how can you hope that a people surrounded by bayonets, will apply the term *mediators* to armed legislators?) will be proposed to the general council, or else simply promulgated.

“In the latter supposition, will any Genevese citizen, no matter to what party he belongs, consider those laws binding which have been forcibly dictated to him? Any code prepared under your inspection will, I am convinced, be equitable and paternal; but such code will be drawn up by peace-makers so foreign to the constitution of the country for which they are legislating, that very little hope can be entertained of the Representatives doing them justice—and if the effects of prejudice are subversive of reason, it cannot be denied that, on the present occasion, the people of Geneva are justified in being at least suspicious. On the other hand, the Negatives, to whom you could never grant sufficient in their own opinion, and who are clever adepts at artifice, reliance, and temporising, will no doubt seem to acquiesce, but will resume the right of again troubling, at the very first opportunity, the political arrangements that give a new constitution to Geneva.

Shall the constitution on the contrary have an entirely aristocratic foundation? It appears to me very rash to calculate for this upon the consent of the nation, the majority of whom will be injured in their pretensions if not in their most valued rights; and nothing is more probable than the refusal of two thirds of the general council to give it their sanction.

“‘We will do without their consent,’ you may say. No doubt, you may easily dispense with their sanction;

but the foreign powers will use this as a fresh argument to persuade the Representatives, as they have tried to do ever since the troops entered Geneva, that the total abolition of the council general, and even of its phantom, is the first clause in the treaty that will be dictated by the aristocrats to their fellow-citizens, through the medium of the guaranteeing powers. The law of the strongest is a law of nations which you must not expect to see respected except by the weakest. A garrison sufficiently numerous to be feared would exceed the forces of this republic, which, besides, would be deserted the very moment such a help became necessary to its government. Now, either the French troops will never quit Geneva, or the nation will soon convince these aristocrats that a government without strength has no other rampart than public opinion and confidence. Shall the cabinet of Versailles, which you have endowed with a reputation for wisdom and moderation, which perhaps is the only kind of glory worthy the ambition of a French King,—be constantly agitated by the quarrels of mechanics, the uneasiness of the neighbours of Geneva, the clamours—too natural alas!—of an ant-hill which an elephant does not disdain to crush? A canal to join the Saone to the Loire would cost only five millions of livres: I doubt that this is twice the amount already absorbed by the expedition to Geneva. The ingenious Perache did not require much more to conquer from the Rhone and

the Saone the site of a great city. Will the Genevese aristocrats ever offer objects of such utility in exchange for the millions of their august protector, who certainly cannot doubt his power over Geneva any day he thinks proper to use it? What a futile occupation for a minister full of great views, and exercising his high duties, is the reconciling of parties which have come into such strong collision for no other reason than because one of them relies upon your support!

“Yes! I swear by my honour and by your glory, upon which our national consideration now depends,—by that glory which the most complete success at Geneva cannot exalt, and the apparent or real oppression of that interesting republic will tarnish for ever,—that the hostile factions would never have ventured to commit the scandalous excesses which you considered yourself bound to repress, if you had prescribed peace equally to both parties, and especially if you had commanded that the peace should originate with themselves. It is by ascribing importance to these dissensions that the French government has really rendered them important. When the aristocrats were convinced that at a certain period, armed with all the authority of the King of France, you would interfere in the affairs of their country, they hastened to reach and to push their opponents towards that period.

“Perhaps—and allow me to say this to you—



perhaps if you had appeared only invested with the personal consideration you enjoy, and as the minister of a great sovereign (and were not these two things sufficient to render you all-powerful at Geneva?)—perhaps if you had whispered to the aristocrats that the fault of the governors is too often that of the governed ; that the magistrates of a free people are always culpable when they disdain the esteem and confidence of that people, and even when they do not obtain it ;—perhaps the sole accents of your voice, of your profound and discreet reason, would have appeased the Genevese, and put an end to their dissensions . . . . Fate has not willed this, but still the case is not desperate.

“ Permit me, animated as I am with a pure zeal which encourages me, and convinces me that this letter cannot displease you—permit me to state to you, with sincerity, and with the familiarity of a sincere friend of truth and humanity, all that strikes me in this matter. My opinion is not to be despised, for I have seen that which you cannot see.

“ The King of France has made himself appear to the Genevese as a severe and angry parent. If his arm drops the deadly weapon he now holds, he will appear only as a father in the eyes of the nations which are observing him with alarm. Recall the French troops ; they are not necessary to keep mechanics in awe, who, even in the excess of their indignation

and despair, have not dared to strike a single French soldier. The ruin of these mechanics is so inevitable, if the troubles and tumult of civil dissensions should continue, that their sole object is to impart to the constitution, and to the government proceeding from it, a permanency which would render it unnecessary ever after to retouch, or even to revise either. Recal these troops, in which the citizen of Geneva, accustomed to other ideas and other customs, sees only instruments of tyranny, destined to violate his thoughts even at the bottom of his soul ;—send back to Geneva those men in whom the citizens have confidence, and the proscription of whom maintains among the Genevese a sense of the injustice they accuse us of. The good faith of these men, and their simple, modest, and indulgent patriotism, would surprise you, misunderstood as they are, in consequence of the storms which have carried them far beyond their own measures. Their integrity is such that their persecutors never dared attempt to seduce them ; and calumny has never been able to allege against them a single fact that would raise a blush upon their cheeks. Become, then, their benefactor ; let them owe to you their restoration to their country. Their adherents will be just as blind without them, and will even falter in pursuing the right path. The great numbers of the fellow-citizens of these exiles who go to console them, risking, by any display of sympathy towards them, the displeasure of the Court

of France, shows the esteem and confidence which they enjoy. When measures of peace have prepared the way for the return of concord, say to the Genevese—

“ ‘ You have, all of you, been stricken with vertigo, and it was for the security of your liberty itself that we thought it necessary to tie your hands for an instant. The moment of your delirium is over; adversity has opened your eyes. Your magistrates no doubt mourn with their fellow-citizens; if they did not, they would be unworthy of the protection of a great King. The citizens have tasted of the bitter fruits produced by a tumultuous confederacy, and have been severely punished. Blind as ye are, bear in mind that man can do nothing except by numbers; that he is strong by union only, and happy only by peace. The most powerful of monarchs is yet not powerful enough to bring back peace among you, if it has not returned to your hearts. **NEGATIVES!** you are indebted to us for your safety and your freedom—respect those of your brethren. We restore to you, **REPRESENTATIVES**, those whom you termed your chiefs, but who shall be so no longer. To you, **MAGISTRATES**, we restore those fellow-citizens whose good intentions and misfortunes alone you must now remember. We restore to all of you your rights as citizens. Far from you be those demonstrations invented by discord and hatred! Let there be no longer at Geneva any other party save

that of the country. You are all brothers ; unite as such, and cement your union by those domestic arrangements which foreigners cannot anticipate, and therefore cannot prescribe. Do not forget that these troubles have arisen in your country because it has never possessed any efficient means, within itself, of putting an end to its civil dissensions. Draw these means from your own constitution ; seek for peace and the preservation of your reciprocal rights in your dependence upon the law, and in the necessity of a mutual confidence. The troops shall leave you ; as you now know whether you are inaccessible or not, and can escape from their power. Go and try to render their presence for ever unnecessary ; and swear that you will spurn from among you the parricide who shall dare to murmur at the family compact which you are about freely to subscribe.'

“ Impart to these few words all the dignity and effect which you have so many means of doing, and you will see the Genevese resume their friendly conferences, and, with much docility and gratitude, appoint commissioners from both parties. To facilitate this reconciliation, to give confidence to all parties, and to strike them with awe, let the plenipotentiaries preside at these conferences ; all will then proceed smoothly, and every one will agree, without your being obliged to trouble yourself with details that will give to ambitious men and their friends the power of

deceiving you, and who cannot but tire to no purpose an administration whose time is valuable and its surcharge of business excessive.

“ There will then be no emigrations to fear, no more complaints, no more calumnies, no more secret imputations of a not very magnanimous abuse by the French government of an authority which ought to be tutelary and not oppressive. Such accusations, which delude the public, often badly informed, but who reign despotically by opinion, and triumph over every known authority—such accusations, I say, always echoed by the public, affect fame, sharpen national hatred, and may hand down to the censure of posterity both the minister and the sovereign who had deserved the gratitude of their nation, of Europe, and of the age in which they lived. The French refugees stained the laurels of the most imposing of our monarchs, and perhaps forged the thunderbolts with which he was stricken towards the close of his life.

“ Such a misfortune will not happen to our august King. He knows too well that true power is moderation—that rectitude is dignity—that oppression is baseness—that justice is honour. He knows that a giant requires not stilts to appear tall. Half the globe will soon be indebted to him for freedom; and he will soon give to Europe a noble, lasting, and salutary peace. O, you who are associated to his glory!—to that glory which monarchs so rarely obtain,—you,

revered moderator of a great empire, whose real success will be a source of congratulation to the whole human race, upon whom the faults of your predecessors have borne too heavily and for too long a period!—do not disdain to protect the liberties of a handful of men lately free, and worthy, I dare to assure you, of being so. Their salvation or their ruin is in your hands; and may the liberator of America never be termed the destroyer of Geneva!”

We trust that this document, hitherto unpublished, will do honour to Mirabeau's memory. The reader will appreciate this generous and philanthropic effort in favour of an oppressed people, when he is reminded that it was amid domestic tribulations and anxieties that Mirabeau spontaneously came forward, not before the public, but before the supreme authority of the state, as the advocate of liberal political principles, and the apostle of freedom.

The letters written by Mirabeau to Chamfort \* are the only public documents that exist concerning the

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\* Published at Paris, year V. Sebastien Roch Nicholas Chamfort was born in 1741 near Clermont in Auvergne. His “Eloges de Molière et de la Fontaine,” and three dramatic pieces—“La Jeune Indienne,” “Le Marchand de Smyrne,” and “Mustapha et Zeangir,” raised him into repute, which, however, seems to have since declined. In 1781 he was elected a member of the French Academy. He died in 1794.

period immediately following the unsuccessful appeal from the decree of separation rendered at Aix, July 5th 1783. No interesting facts are found in this correspondence, which appears to have been but little noticed by the public\*, although several letters, really worthy of Mirabeau's genius, display to great advantage the skill of the writer, the sagacity of the philosopher, and the learning of the civilian. It is true that, with reference to facts, few are to be found except insignificant details concerning Mirabeau's pecuniary difficulties; the works which he thought likely to bring him funds; his plans and attempts; his hopes and disappointments; and lastly, concerning the incidents of an obscure affair of gallantry, in which the interests of Chamfort were stipulated by Mirabeau, not a very effective agent in such a matter. These letters contain, besides, some obscure and entangled metaphysical theses, and much praise and flattery, so stilted that we may be permitted to doubt their sincerity, though the editor† appears to have taken them

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\* We have no knowledge of any reprint of these letters during the last thirty-eight years.

† Pierre Louis Ginguené, a literary man and a periodical writer, in 1791, in the "*La Feuille Villageoise*;" then in the "*Decade Philosophique*;" and lastly in the "*Mercure de France*." He is the author of "*Fables, Epigrams, and other Poems*;" also of a great and beautiful work entitled "*Literary History of Italy*," and numerous articles in the "*Biographie Universelle*." He likewise edited the works of the poet P. D. E. Lebrun, those of Chamfort, &c. He

in a serious light. Indeed this seems to have been his principal motive for publishing these letters; and his extreme admiration of Chamfort led him to suppose that, in this writer, Mirabeau acknowledged "great superiority" over himself, and spoke to him "as a disciple to his master."

We shall not assuredly discuss this strange assertion, for posterity has already settled the question, by placing Mirabeau and Chamfort in very different ranks.

Neither shall we give an analysis of these letters, because, in the first place, they will scarcely bear analysing, and in the next, they are not of sufficient importance to fix the attention of our readers. We shall merely state here that the editor placed after the letters a "Summary of the German Dissertation on the causes of the universality of the French Language, which shared the prize of the Berlin Academy\*."

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was successively a member of the Committee of Public Instruction, Ambassador from France to the King of Sardinia, and a tribune. He was also member of the Institute. Ginguéné was born at Rennes in 1748, and died at Paris, November 17th 1816.

\* Forty-six pages 8vo. This prize was given, in 1784, jointly to Rivarol and to the author of the dissertation of which Mirabeau wrote a summary. This author is not named in any of the works we have consulted, nor in Mirabeau's manuscript, which states only that "the dissertation was read at the public meeting at Berlin by M. Mérian:" no doubt the learned and ingenious philosopher Jean Bernard Mérian, Director of the Class of Belles-Lettres at the Academy of Berlin. He was born September 28th 1723, and died February 12th 1807.



This "summary" is an extract by Mirabeau, or at least revised by him, if we may judge from the manuscript, which is full of corrections in his handwriting. The extract, however, is substantial, interesting, and curious; it is also very remarkable in style and method. We shall, however, say nothing more of it, because it is only a simple analysis, a work of patience, a mere study, and not a composition of Mirabeau's.

Though it appears unnecessary in this place to dwell upon the "Letters to Chamfort," we shall nevertheless take from them, as well as from our own materials, some particulars concerning Mirabeau's residence in England, whither he went in August 1784.

Two reasons induced him to go thither: one was the fear of being arrested in consequence of his furtive and rash publication of his Case in Cassation, or rather of the sort of preface he had written to it, which, we have already stated, was calculated to give offence to the Keeper of the Seals; the other was the necessity of completing the materials for his "Considerations on the order of Cincinnatus," a work we shall soon have occasion to mention.

Mirabeau took with him on this journey, the infant we have already mentioned in the preface to this work, and at the end of Book XIII, Vol. III. He loved this child, then two years old, with extreme affection, and it remained with him until his death. He was also accompanied by a young female whom he had attached

to his fate, and of whom we are bound to say a few words.

We must premise that this connexion, though irregular, was not a public scandal like the former *liaison*; and in spite of the situation in which the young woman was placed, she never ceased to command the respect and affection of all who knew her: a just reward for the exquisite qualities with which she contrived to cover the only blemish that could be imputed to her. To this we may add that she inspired Mirabeau with an attachment of a nature very different from, and much more durable than, any former connexion of a similar description.

Henrietta Amelia, born May 15th 1765, was a natural daughter of Onno Zwier Van Haren\*, who acquired great renown in Holland by the ability he displayed in the highest public employments, and by his great talents, in history and high literature. At fourteen years of age, she lost her excellent father, and having only a very small annuity to live upon, the interesting orphan was placed as a boarder in a convent at Paris. Here Mirabeau became acquainted with her about the beginning of 1784. She had no relations, no friends, no experience, and no power of defence. Subdued by the pity with which Mirabeau's misfortunes inspired her, and seduced by the magic of his

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\* Born at Leeuwarden (Friesland) in 1713, and died at Amsterdam in 1779.

language, she united herself to him, consented to follow him, and for several years strongly fixed him by her beauty, her good sense, and the power of a virtue the more touching because a single fault rendered her as modest as she was gentle and shrinking,—as well as by the truly maternal care she bestowed upon the child beloved by Mirabeau, and which she had adopted as her own\*.

Accustomed to meet with all sorts of accidents in his travels, Mirabeau was nearly lost in crossing the Channel†. Shortly after his arrival, he gave an account of his impressions in a letter, part of which we insert

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\* Henrietta Amelia is always mentioned under the name of Madame de Nehra, an anagram of the name of Haren. Mirabeau, in his posthumous letters, has alluded only once or twice to Madame de Nehra, whom we mention because several public events are connected with her name; and as we shall make her known by quotations from unpublished documents only, we think it right to insert here a few words concerning her in the "Letters to Chamfort."

"I have a companion of my fate, amiable, mild and good, and whose beauty would infallibly have rendered her rich, if her excellent moral qualities had not withheld her." (p. 76.) "My companion is, as you have seen her, beautiful, mild, good, even-tempered, full of courage and of that charm of sensibility which makes every thing bearable, even the evils it produces." (p. 87.) "You shall see her angelic countenance, her penetrating gentleness, the magic fascination that surrounds her." (p. 91.) "I swear to you, my friend, in all the sincerity of my soul, that I am not worthy of her, and that her mind is of a superior cast, in tenderness, delicacy, and goodness." (p. 92.)

† Letters to Chamfort, p. 48.

here, because in it will be found the subjects that usually occupied his thoughts.

“The approaches to London are of a rustic beauty of which not even Holland has furnished models (I should rather compare them to some valley in Switzerland); for—and this very remarkable fact immediately catches an experienced eye—this domineering people are, beyond every thing, agriculturists in their island; and it is this that has so long saved them from their own delirium. I felt my heart strongly and deeply moved as I passed through this highly cultivated and prosperous land, and I said to myself—‘Wherefore this emotion so new to me?’ These country-seats compared with ours are mere country boxes. Several parts of France, even in the worst of its provinces, and all Normandy, through which I have just passed, are assuredly more beautiful in natural scenery than this country. There are to be found here and there in France, especially in our own province, noble edifices, splendid establishments, immense public works, vast traces of the most prodigious efforts of man; and yet here I am delighted much more than I was ever surprised in my own country, by the things I have mentioned. It is because here nature is improved and not forced; it is because these roads, narrow but excellent, do not remind me of forced or average labour, except to lament over the country in which such labour is known; it is because this admirable state

of cultivation shows me the respect paid to property; it is because this care, this universal cleanliness is a speaking symptom of welfare; it is because all this rural wealth is in nature, near to nature, and according to nature, and does not, like splendid palaces surrounded with hovels, betray the excessive inequality of fortunes, which is the source of so many evils; it is because all tells me that here the people are something—that every man enjoys the development and free exercise of his faculties, and that I am in another order of things\*.”

We insert also another passage, in which again appears the man continually pre-occupied with the interests of freedom; and we give this extract the more readily because, on the one hand, the letters to Chamfort are, as we have already said, very little known, and on the other, because Mirabeau's precarious and painful situation in England prevented him from writing, according to his first intention, the observations which the British constitution naturally suggested to a mind like his.

“I am not an enthusiast in favour of England, and I now know sufficient of that country to tell you that if its constitution is the best known, the application of this constitution is the worst possible†; and that if

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\* Letters from Mirabeau to Chamfort, pp. 50, 51.

† In 1778, Mirabeau wrote: “When will the English perceive that the systems introduced into the councils of their court have

the Englishman is, as a social man, the most free in the world, the English people are the least free of any\*.

\* \* \* \* \* What then is freedom, since the small portion of it found in one or two laws, places in the first rank a nation so little favoured by nature? What may a constitution not effect, when this one, though incomplete and defective, saves and will save for some time to come the most corrupt people in the universe from their own corruption†? How great must be the influence of a small number of data favourable to the human species since this people—ignorant, superstitious, obstinate (for they are all this), covetous, and very near to Punic faith, are better than most other nations,

prodigiously advanced in their country the work of despotism? How badly applied in practice is the beautiful theory of their government! And how ill-composed, and ill-combined are the parties constituting their legislative assemblies!"—*Lettres de Cachet*, vol. i. p. 232.

\* Letters to Chamfort, p. 69.

† Eighteen months previously, Mirabeau wrote in a work never published, but which afforded us some extracts added to our account of the suit for a separation carried on at Aix in 1783,—we allude to the "Letters addressed to a former Magistrate concerning the suit between the Count and Countess of Mirabeau."

"Will England be adduced as an objection? But that State is constituted! The English have a country!—and this is the reason why the people the most fanatic, the most ignorant and the most corrupt in the whole world, have a public spirit, civic virtues, and incredible success, even in the midst of their delirium. This is the reason why, despite of nature, they have assumed the first rank among nations!"

known, because they enjoy a small portion of civil liberty\*.”

In the beginning of February 1785, Madame de Nehra left London for Paris, in order to make preparations for her friend's return thither. Mirabeau wrote to her frequently, and we here transcribe one of his letters, because it contains an interesting fact, and places his character in a most favourable light; for he assuredly could never have guessed that his letter would be published.

“The day after your departure, my kind friend, I had a serious alarm which has not diminished my just melancholy. It was thought that the plague was in London, and you may well suppose that I blessed Providence for your departure! But judge to what agony I saw you exposed, if this dreadful scourge, let loose here, intercepted all correspondence with the rest of the world, and left your friend amid devastation

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\* Letters to Chamfort, p. 69. In reference to the imperfections of the British constitution, and especially to the abuses and inefficiency of the national representation, Mirabeau says elsewhere,—

“A man must be an Englishman to have a right to speak against the English. It appears as if hitherto other nations were to be consoled by being talked to about the defects of the English constitution, and its abuses. This resembles those individuals wearing slight bonds who go and complain to slaves loaded with heavy chains. It is not considered that the bonds do not destroy any of the sensibility, whilst the chains destroy all feeling.”—“*Considerations on the Order of Cincinnatus*,” notes upon a writing by Dr. Price, p. 349.

and death, without your possessing any human means, I do not say of relieving him, but of knowing whether he still breathed, or whether he had perished. These dreadful fears, which had already driven several families suddenly into the country, fortunately subsided almost as soon as they were raised; but I spent a cruel day and a cruel night, not assuaged assuredly by the necessity of concealing from you the cause of my alarm. This was what gave rise to it. A woman seized with putrid fever attended with the most alarming symptoms, was taken to one of the hospitals, where, in the course of the day, the disease carried off three other patients, and the surgeon who attended them. A guard was immediately sent to the hospital, and it was in contemplation to wall up the ward, and place a cordon of troops round the building. This was sufficient to fill the whole city with dread, and to rouse into activity the thieves with which it swarms. Fortunately there were no deaths on the following day, at least in the suspected ward, and the alarm began to subside. Thus I had, as you perceive, a pretence for following you very closely; but, besides that the plague is not, in my mind, the greatest of dangers, far from it—how could I have deserted a country smitten with so dreadful a calamity? I know that, being neither a public man nor an Englishman, I was by no means bound to consider Great Britain my post, although circumstances had stationed me there at such a juncture. But



I fear this is rather an evasion than a reason. I am not an Englishman, but I am a man; and whoever loses not his presence of mind is always a public man on a day of calamity. Besides, Elliot\* is so much my brother, I owe him a devotedness so entire and affectionate, and he would have found himself in such a state of embarrassment, being the only man in his family, which is surcharged with women and children, that I should never have had the courage to desert him†."

The real object of Madame de Nehra's journey was to ascertain whether it was true, as Mirabeau had been informed, that he might return to Paris without any ground of apprehension for his safety. But calumny had been busy with him during his absence: the public authorities were persuaded that he had gone to England to write a work against themselves. They supposed that he was anxious to return merely to complete his materials, and clandestinely prepare his work for publication. Madame de Nehra had therefore strong grounds for personal alarm, which she commu-

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\* Sir Gilbert Elliot, afterwards Earl of Minto, born April 23rd 1751, Governor of Corsica in 1794, Ambassador at Vienna in 1799, and Governor-general of India in 1807. The Earl of Minto died June 21st 1814. He had been Mirabeau's schoolfellow at the Abbé Choquart's, and ever after held the first rank among Mirabeau's most constant, most useful, and most illustrious friends.

† Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Madame de Nehra, dated March 8th 1783.

nicated to her friend, and in reply to her letter on this occasion, he wrote the following :—

“ I did not receive your terrible letter till to-day, and should have immediately set out for Paris, if Elliot had not opposed it with the most affectionate instances. Yet he brought me to his way of thinking only by convincing me that it was very important we should not both at once run the same risks. He had great difficulty in bringing me to his opinion, although his entreaties were attended with the most affectionate and most touching interest, independently of my concern for his situation—for he is very ill. I would at first listen to nothing ; my head was full of your danger and embarrassments. But at length the probability of my hearing from you to-morrow ; the remark, true enough, that your third letter, though it reached me before your second, but was written subsequently, was in a somewhat calmer strain ; and the certainty that at this moment I should rather increase than diminish your danger, have forced from me the promise not to stir until I hear further from you. But, good God !—what a state of anxiety I am in ! What a fate is mine ! Who could have foreseen—who would not have been horror-stricken at the idea, that the most absurd of calumnies would have armed against me so many enemies, and have cooled so many pretended friends ? I, in London for the purpose of writing against my country !—and because you assert the contrary, you have to fear an

*act of authority!* Really, my sweet friend, it is impossible to get rid of my alarm when so closely connected with the object of my affection; otherwise I should deem very absurd the fears with which you have been inspired, perhaps to detach you from me and sever our connexion . . . . Yet, great God! if these fears were well founded—if those wicked people should not even require a pretence—if the hatred of my enemies were to bear upon you alone!—the very thought drives me mad. Do not remain a moment at Paris. What is the world's opinion to me, compared with your safety? What care I about the approbation of pretended friends, who may waver and doubt instead of freeing you from the weight of embarrassment under which you may be crushed? Of what value in my estimation is any interest compared with the happiness of seeing you? Set out and come hither to a free country, and, in the bosom of friendship, brave both calumniators and tyrants. My gentle friend, my attachment for you cannot increase, but how should my gratitude not increase when your heroism, at so tender an age, inspires every body with admiration? Your letter has made all who have read it shed tears \* \* \* \* \*.

“ You had resolved to go to Versailles. What have you done there?—how were you received? What a worry for your mind!—what a place for your simplicity! How little has nature qualified you or me

for such a place !—you who are so gentle and yet so proud—I, who, though kind-hearted, am so intractable when I encounter haughtiness and duplicity, stupidity and despotism ;—and both of us so wedded to domestic happiness and peaceful enjoyments\*.”

This state of uneasiness lasted some time longer, and occasioned several other letters upon these same subjects, which we refrain from transcribing, as they would occupy too much space.

Mirabeau, tired of waiting for a formal permission, ventured to return to France†, whither we shall follow him as soon as we have given a summary account of the works which occupied him in London during a residence of six months in that city.

We have stated that Mirabeau took with him to London, in a state of great progress, the work which appeared September 20th 1784, under the title of “ Considerations upon the Order of Cincinnatus‡.”

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Madame de Nehra, dated March 10th 1785.

† He reached Paris the 27th March, before he could have known anything of a letter written on the 24th by the Baron de Breteuil, and which Peuchet, who publishes everything, has inserted in his work, vol. ii. p. 315.

‡ “ Or, Imitation of an Anglo-American pamphlet,” by the Count of Mirabeau ; followed by several documents relative to this institution ; by a letter from General Washington, accompanied with remarks by the French author ; by a letter from the late M. Turgot, Minister of State in France, to Dr. Price, on the American laws ; and by a translation of a pamphlet by Dr. Price, entitled “ Obser-

The peace, signed January 20th 1783, had recognised the independence of the United States of America, so gloriously freed from the yoke of Great Britain \*. Soon after, a society composed of American

vations on the Importance of the American Revolution, and the Means of making it a Benefit to the World, accompanied with the translator's reflections and notes." London: J. Johnson, 1784. A volume 8vo. of 384 pages, with the following epigraph:—"The glory of soldiers cannot be completed without acting well the part of citizens."

Mirabeau put his name to this work. It was the first time he had done so.

"I never published anything under a name which my father has rendered difficult to bear†. I have hitherto considered myself justified in not acknowledging the first essays of a man still young, and who, more than another, wants maturity.

"I should have done the same thing much longer, and perhaps always; but well-known circumstances having forced me to quit my country, I consider myself bound in future to publish none but my avowed productions. Were I to neglect this precaution, people would not fail to ascribe to me works calculated to involve me in difficulties. I protest, then, that in future, all that does not bear my name will be falsely attributed to me; and I hope that those who honour me with their hatred will perceive that I shall not be more timid from having taken such an engagement."—*Preface to the "Considerations on the Order of Cincinnatus,"* pp. iii. and iv.

Mirabeau had also announced this intention to Chamfort, for fear, he said, "of the authorship being imputed to him of the vile anonymous trash that pullulates in London."—*Letters to Chamfort,* p. 65.

\* At the moment of shaking off a yoke which had become intolerable, the Americans publicly stated their grounds of complaint against the mother country. This manifesto had struck Mirabeau,

† Mirabeau, from conviction, always spoke thus concerning his father, perhaps more as a thinker than as a writer.

officers, was formed under the name of "Association of the Cincinnati\*," and an external badge was conferred, in order, as it was said, to perpetuate the remembrance of the war of independence. This species of order of knighthood, rendered hereditary by its first statutes, formed a strange contrast with the events and results which it purported to commemorate. Some Americans considered it dangerous to liberty, and calculated to change republican institutions in their very origin, by introducing into them the element of a titled aristocracy. A pamphlet on

then detained in the donjon of Vincennes. This is what he wrote on the subject:—

"The sublime manifesto of the United States of America has been generally applauded. God forbid that I should protest against the public opinion on this subject—I who, were I not in prison, would go to them, to learn from as well as to fight for them. But I would ask, whether the powers which have contracted alliances with them—and this especially applies to France, their principal ally—have dared to read this manifesto, and to interrogate their consciences after having read it? I would ask if, at this time, there is a government in Europe, the Swiss and Dutch Confederacies, and the British Isles alone excepted, which, were it judged according to the declaration of the Congress made 4th July 1776, would not be deprived of its power? I would ask whether, of the thirty-two Kings of the third race of our monarchs, more than two-thirds have not been much more guilty towards their subjects, than the Kings of Great Britain have been towards the British Colonies?"—*Lettres de Cachet*, vol. i. p. 284.

\* This was an allusion to the retirement of Washington, who, on resigning the command of the Republican armies, withdrew to Virginia, where he cultivated his estate.

the subject was published in America; Mirabeau, at the request of Dr. Franklin, undertook to translate it. It may easily be supposed that he would gladly have performed the task even without such a request, if we may judge from his previous opinions, and from what he says concerning the object of his work.

“Such a subject is one of inspiration, especially when the writer exposes a theory which is almost his own, and the practice of which has directed and constituted his whole life. It is, however, a curious and remarkable thing that philosophy and freedom have raised their heads in the middle of Paris to warn the New World of the perils of servitude, and point out to it from afar the dangers that threaten its posterity. Never did eloquence defend a more noble cause. Perhaps a corrupt people may enlighten a new people. Instructed by their own evils, they may teach others to avoid such evils, and servitude itself may prove useful by becoming the school of freedom\*.”

Mirabeau had prepared this work at Paris; but he increased it in England by a translation of the “Observations” by Dr. Price, a respectable English economist and civilian, “On the Importance of the American Revolution, and the Means of making it a Benefit to the World;” also by reflections which, it seems, were principally written by the celebrated advocate Target†; by a letter, in which, in 1778,

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\* Letters to Chamfort, p. 29.

† Ibid. p. 81.

Target had expressed his opinion on the defects of the American constitution \* ; and by another letter written by Dr. Price, with a similar intention.

This work has fallen into a species of oblivion, which may be accounted for not only by the ephemeral and limited nature of the subject, but likewise by the manner in which the author has treated it, and by the incoherence of several pieces that he incorporated with it, an addition since attributed to a desire of increasing the size of the volume, in order that it might fetch a higher price †.

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\* Mirabeau's enemies did not fail to detract from the merit of his work by representing it to be a servile and literal translation. Two years later, he publicly defended himself, in the following terms, against this unjust imputation.

"I have stated my book upon the Cincinnati to be an imitation of an Anglo-American pamphlet. In my preface I mention the sheet of this Ædamus Burke, who, it is said, claims my work. And if those who now quote it, had only read it, they would have understood that they could not very easily succeed in making a thick volume, twice translated into English (in London and in America), and about to be published in German, pass for a translation of sixteen octavo or twenty-four duodecimo pages; for the very estimable pamphlet of Ædamus Burke has been published in both these forms. However, and not to appear more modest than I am, I confess that if I could translate so, I should do nothing but translate."—*Introduction to the paper on Moses Mendelssohn, and the political reform of the Jews*, p. 3, note.

† Whatever judgment the public may have pronounced upon this book, we have proof that Mirabeau was not dissatisfied with it himself. This is what he says in his Letters to Mauvillon, an enlightened and severe critic.

"I confess that I set some value upon my 'Considerations on the



The original work was only a small pamphlet, long enough perhaps for the discussion of a passing political question. Mirabeau, who has spun it out to a volume, could succeed in doing so only by forced developments, which he had no other means of effecting than by exaggerating beyond measure his objections, and supposing that the sharing of a few ribands and medals among the heroic founders of a great republic, would overthrow it the very day after its foundation; and this too by causes of ruin which generally arise only during the lengthened progress of time, the forgetfulness of principles, the desuetude of the laws, the alteration of institutions, and the corruption of morals.

Hence, we confess with regret, have arisen prolixity and repetitions, declamation and injustice, and the

Order of Cincinnatus.' It appears to me that, in this work, there is good philosophical feeling, and good oratory; the part relating to the decorated patriciate seems to me new; and I cannot but think that the subject has been examined in all its bearings. It is, of all I ever wrote, that with which I am the least dissatisfied." (p. 28.)

It has been asserted by several writers, and among others by Ginguéné, the editor of Mirabeau's Letters to Chamfort (note, p. 30) that Chamfort wrote a considerable part of the "Consideration upon the Order of Cincinnatus," and especially "the most brilliant parts." This assertion is wholly untrue, and proves very little acquaintance with the style of either of these two writers. To a person free from prejudice, who will read the work with attention, would be as difficult to discover the least traces of Chamfort's style as it is easy to recognise that of Mirabeau, who is one among few distinguished writers that take little trouble to vary their style and manner.

fault of not proving any thing by attempting to prove too much.

Some short time before his departure from London, Mirabeau published another work, suggested to him by particular circumstances.

One of the stipulations in the treaty of Munster (1648), secured to Holland the monopoly of the navigation of the mouths of the Scheldt. Vessels entering from the sea, could not, in ascending that river, pass the assumed boundary line that crossed it from the points corresponding with the frontiers separating the United Provinces from the Low Countries, which latter then belonged to Austria. The same line also formed the limits at which all boats coming from the interior of the continent—that is to say, from the Low Countries—were to stop in descending the Scheldt.

In 1784, the Emperor of Austria, Joseph II, began by claiming the abolition of this monopoly, the legitimate possession of which did not appear to him sufficiently established by time,—a species of title which the innovating monarch held in but slight account. He soon afterwards proclaimed the freedom of the Scheldt, and announced that he should consider any opposition or resistance by the Dutch, a declaration of war. The Dutch, justified by possession during a century and half, excited by the interests of their vast trade, perhaps even of their political existence, and encouraged

by the secret support of France and England, loudly declared their refusal to admit the claim, and made vast preparations for defending their right. A great collision therefore appeared imminent between the two powers and their respective allies.

The struggle fortunately took place only between two celebrated writers, who on this occasion appeared to have changed sides. Linguet\*, the avowed supporter of despotism, declared for the Emperor Joseph II, who appeared to be defending the general interest of all against the private interests of a few. Mirabeau, the apostle of freedom, maintained a contrary proposition, that is to say, he supported the cause of the Dutch. Although, from feeling and principle, he was favourable to the most complete system of commercial freedom, nevertheless, on the present occasion, he defended a treaty of restriction, the original motive of which arose perhaps more from prudential considerations than from any selfish calculation of exclusive benefit. To avoid the imputation of inconsistency

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\* Peuchet, in speaking of this controversy, makes a singular blunder: he supposes, vol. ii. p. 329, that Linguet replied to Mirabeau, whereas it was Mirabeau who replied to Linguet. The same mistake seems to have been made in page 162, No. 5, of the "Révue de Paris," where the writer says that Mirabeau was beaten by Linguet, an expression by no means clear, when it is considered, 1st, That Linguet's reply, supposing he ever wrote one, has never been quoted; 2nd, That the wish expressed by Mirabeau, and advocated by him, was realised almost immediately after his publication.

and deserting his favourite theories, he attempted to prove a fact, the consequences to be apprehended from which warranted an apparently less liberal system of policy. This fact was, that a coalition of the Northern powers existed to weaken and afterwards subdue those of the South. He undertook to prove that the freedom of the mouths of the Scheldt was one of the means of success which would best second the plans of the Northern league, by ruining Holland, and thus depriving the South of one of its most useful ramparts. Hence he inferred that bold and decisive measures, and even a partial war, would have the advantage of settling the question before the political knot had become so intricate that it was impossible to untie it, and of preventing a general conflagration among the powers interested.

Such was the subject of the work which Mirabeau published December 28th 1784, entitled: "Doubts on the freedom of the Scheldt claimed by the Emperor; and on the probable Causes and Consequences of this claim. By the Count of Mirabeau\*."

It is not necessary to dwell any longer upon this work. It is well known that the event was conformable to Mirabeau's views, that is to say, that Joseph II. gave up his pretensions on condition that Holland

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\* London, 8vo, 168 pages, with an Appendix of 40 pages. It bore this epigraph: *Bellum jure gentium perpetuæ pacis causa movetur.* Gravina de Orig. Jur. Civ. 11, 14.

should pay the expenses of his preparations. We are assuredly far from supposing that Mirabeau's pamphlet had any influence in producing this result. We do not even think that it increased his reputation as a political writer, or that he derived any other advantage from it than the few pounds which his publisher paid for it, and which his extreme poverty rendered very acceptable. But whatever may be the blemishes of this hasty production, from its want of method and precision, and its bloated style, it certainly does honour to Mirabeau's memory, by giving further proof of his courageous philanthropy and political sagacity.

Several biographers, with reference to the "Considerations on the Order of Cincinnatus," and the "Doubts on the Freedom of the Scheldt," have imputed to Mirabeau motives of pecuniary interest which, as much and perhaps more than his political convictions, induced him to write at this period \*. We readily admit that the fact is not unfounded. But ought not the censure to fall to the ground before this too certain fact, that Mirabeau was writing for his *actual bread*? He had neither estates, nor an-

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\* Peuchet speaks of "prolixity which appears to have no other object than the want of filling up a volume." (Vol. ii. p. 329.) Now, we may fairly ask whether such a reproach is not singular from a man who, all his life, has made up books from other books, and has published on Mirabeau's life, four volumes, entirely composed of documents before published, without the addition of a single new fact, or a single unpublished sentence?

nuities, nor offices, nor appointments, nor pension—not even his dotal pension, which was contested; in short, he had no income at all. Is it not evident that, under these circumstances, the fruits of his labour were the only means he possessed for providing food for himself and those dependent upon him? Who then, without injustice, can impute to him his literary labours as a crime, especially on considering that after his release from prison he wrote only upon matters of general interest; that, in most cases, he wrote under the excitement of real conviction; that in those instances where his conviction is doubtful, he lays down no propositions that, if they could be attacked, might not be ably defended and with good faith; and that, with the exception of his “Correspondence from Berlin,” of which we shall speak when the time comes, he never published a single thing really blameable, or bearing the remotest resemblance to the hideous rhapsodies which hunger tore from his pen in the donjon of Vincennes.

Although firmly resolved to avoid, as much as possible, bringing any portion of the *private life* into those parts of the present work devoted to the *public life*, we cannot terminate our account of Mirabeau’s residence in England without refuting two calumnious assertions made by his principal biographer.

Peuchet, immediately after mentioning the “Doubts on the Freedom of the Scheldt,” fixes this period,

December 1784, as that of Sophie's death, though we have proved, in another place, that she died five years subsequently.

Speaking of this same period he also says : " Mirabeau experienced real grief at the loss of the young and interesting Countess of Nehra. The life of torment and necessity which she led during the three years she spent with him, her journey to England, and her troubles at Paris, brought her to the grave."— Vol. iii. p. 332.

Here again Peuchet invents when he is ignorant of facts ; and during three pages of declamatory lamentation he so manages his inventions, that they become calumnies. He concludes in these terms :—

" It is, then, true that Mirabeau was destined to cause the misfortune of every woman who repaid his passion with the most tender affection. They who sacrificed to him duty, fortune, peace and happiness, were the victims of their fatal attachment."

This is certainly a severe sentence, which has not been lost for Peuchet's successors, for we give the following paraphrase, which is even much more highly coloured than the original text :—

" At this period (1784) died the Countess of Nehra. Poverty, mental affliction, fatigue, her journeys from Paris, and uneasiness regarding the future, brought her to the grave. The destiny of this amiable woman is as painful to relate as that of the sensible and

unhappy Sophie. Does the reader not imagine that he is reading the tale of *THE VAMPIRE*? All the females who approach this species of Lord Ruthven, die of misery and of love. This man drags them without fear or remorse through shame and poverty, until the grave opens to receive them\*."

These sentences, and those which follow them, are no doubt very eloquent; but there is a very strong fact to oppose to them: Madame de Nehra did not die in 1784, but June 24th 1818; she thus outlived Mirabeau more than twenty-seven years. Though he was generally an inconstant lover, he was an affectionate and useful friend, and he never ceased to cherish this lady as fondly as she loved him. He left her 20,000 francs by his will, in which she was the second person named—the author of this work being the first.

The other fact mentioned by Peuchet†, and afterwards, on his authority, by the writer in the "*Revue de Paris*," relates to a copying clerk named Hardi, whom Mirabeau employed at Paris and sent for when in London.

Peuchet's account is both absurd and unfounded. We have a statement of the affair written by Madame de Nehra, which we do not publish on account of its length, though it is interesting and bears the imprint

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\* 1831. *Revue de Paris*, vol. xxiv. No. 3. March 20th, p. 162.

† Vol. ii. p. 318.



of truth. We shall reduce our explanation of this circumstance to as few words as possible.

Mirabeau, on leaving Paris, being uncertain as to what might occur to him, confided to Hardi some very secret papers, relating to himself, his mother, and other persons, especially some females whose names we are not called upon to mention, as they have been noticed by none of our predecessors. When, on Hardi's arrival, Mirabeau asked for his papers, they were not forthcoming, and he could not obtain even the slightest explanation. Alarmed at the idea of the possible, nay probable danger of a furtive publication which might be imputed to him as a crime, he consulted with his friends, including Sir Gilbert Elliot, all of whom advised an action at law, as the surest way of justifying himself by anticipation. Hardi was accordingly prosecuted by Mirabeau, and not Mirabeau by Hardi, as Peuchet states \*, for the restitution of a deposit, and not for robbery. Sir Gilbert Elliot in person stated the case to the Court, adding the advice he had given to the complainant, and his own share in the transaction. Hardi was sent to prison, and formed so correct a judgment upon his own case, that he never ventured, at least then and openly, to utter a word of the recrimination asserted by Peuchet ; though it is more than probable that, after such severe treatment, the thought of recrimination would naturally have occurred to his

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\* Vol. ii. p. 318.

mind, especially in a country the laws of which would have favoured such a defence.

This is the exact truth concerning a fact which Peuchet has so misrepresented as to disgrace Mirabeau's memory. But whence this animosity?—and how can such ignorance be accounted for? We seek not to explain the animosity, for we have never been able to discover its cause. The ignorance is easily accounted for, because Peuchet undertook to write Mirabeau's life without any knowledge of it, except from documents previously published. He could obtain no materials from Madame du Saillant, who refused him her confidence, more especially as the individual alone charged to justify Mirabeau's memory, and who now addresses the reader, was with her at the period of Peuchet's application. This biographer, however, bent upon writing a voluminous work, sought his materials from all sources, without care, judgment, or choice. With regard to the law proceedings between Mirabeau and Hardi, he took his version from a disgraceful libel published March 27th 1787, entitled "Considerations on the 'Denunciation of Stock-jobbing,'" and from another pamphlet written by some pretended champion of Necker. The second of these libels is nothing more than a copy of the first, which was partly written under Hardi's dictation. We may add, that Peuchet did not examine this document throughout, which every judicious and candid biographer would

have rejected at a single glance, because the fury, exaggeration, and falsehood of hatred are stamped upon every sentence. We repeat, that Peuchet did not even read it with common attention, although he has translated several of its pages \*, for otherwise it would have informed him that Madame de Nehra, whose death he states to have taken place in 1784, was still alive in 1787, as the libel in question speaks of her in most defamatory terms, as of a *living* person †.

Mirabeau, while in London, had conceived a hope of writing some great literary work which would have afforded him permanent means of subsistence. For instance, such an undertaking as that which we have already stated he had planned at Vincennes,—that is to say, a methodical series of extracts from the valuable but confused compilation entitled “Memoirs of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres.” He had likewise imagined a work entitled “Le Conservateur,” which should contain a selection of pieces from old works, almost forgotten from the daily increase of new publications,—an increase then very sensible, but the progress of which has since been prodigious and incal-

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\* Vol. iii. pp. 98 to 102.

† Mirabeau was much affected at this libel, which he mentions in a letter to Mauvillon :—

“I want to prepare Madame de Nehra for the perusal of a horrible libel against myself, in which she is atrociously, gratuitously, and calumniously insulted. He for whom she suffers must at least console her.”—P. 224.

culable. These plans were at first listened to, but afterwards rejected by the timid London publishers, who seemed to have but little of the speculating spirit of their nation\*. Mirabeau was therefore compelled to confine his labours to the two works he published there; and we know of no other written by him in London, and unpublished, except the beginning of a History of Geneva, the autograph manuscript of which we gave to the late M. Etienne Dumont† of Geneva, when he last visited Paris, in April 1826, and a sermon on the immortality of the soul, composed for a young refugee clergyman. This latter gentleman had been recommended from Geneva to Mirabeau, who drew him from poverty, not by pecuniary aid, which

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\* There is reason to believe that Mirabeau did not meet with more encouragement in his own country, if it be true (a fact we can neither affirm nor deny) that a prospectus was circulated at Paris, as is asserted in the "*Mémoires Secrets pour servir à l'Histoire de la République des Lettres.*" (London: John Adamson. Vol. xxxi. pp. 91, 93. February 10th and 11th 1786.

† Etienne Dumont, a native of Geneva, known principally by his translations of, and commentaries upon, the writings of Jeremy Bentham. Etienne Dumont was very intimate with Mirabeau in 1789, and wrote several political works for him. In 1831, a volume was published under the title of "*Recollections of Mirabeau,*" being a series of fragments and notes which Etienne Dumont had not intended for publication, at least in the state they were then in, and which he himself termed a simple sketch, a qualification the editor has preserved—not in the title-page, but in his Preface. We shall, hereafter, have occasion to notice these "*Recollections*" by Etienne Dumont. This excellent man, as able as he was learned and virtuous, died at Milan, September 28th 1829.

he had no means of affording, but by the gift of this sermon, by the aid of which the young priest obtained a lucrative appointment. We intend, at some future time, to publish, from the autograph manuscript, this eloquent production, which, both in subject and in form, is essentially different from the other writings of the author, and must in every respect do honour to his memory.

### BOOK III.

MIRABEAU reached Paris April 1st 1785. It was his intention to retire into Provence with Madame de Nehra and their adopted child, there to give himself up entirely to the composition of a great historical work, the materials for which he had long since collected; and in the meantime to endeavour to obtain, by amicable means, or at least without publicity, some settlement regarding the payment of the pension originally settled upon him when he married, and which would suffice for his wants during his laborious retirement. His plan was not to appear in the world until he was ready to publish a serious and well matured work which might entitle him to expect that, with oblivion of the past, he should obtain distinction and a chance of being employed in the public affairs of the state.

This prudent and praiseworthy project was, however, overthrown by an unexpected incident. The boy whom Mirabeau had adopted, fell so dangerously ill that it

was impossible to remove him. Meanwhile Mirabeau, having been introduced by Clavière to the Genevese banker Panchaud, kept up a constant intercourse with both. Their conversation generally turned upon questions of finance, a subject Mirabeau had studied in England, and which, at this period, occupied the public attention. His active mind was soon excited by questions relating to this branch of public economy, and he at length gave up the idea of retiring to Mirabeau Castle\*.

For some years past, the wants of the state, and

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\* This project, evidence of which is to be found in the family correspondence and in the memoirs written by Madame de Nehra, is also proved by the following passage in the preface to the work entitled "De la Caisse d'Escompte."

"Tired of a life of trouble, and being sure that repose and quiet are the only pure and unalloyed gifts which Providence has granted to man†, I quitted proud Albion, a country, for any other person, more worthy of esteem and curiosity than of affection and regret, but in which I found the sincerest and most devoted of friends, and *was proceeding to the only residence in which fate has left me any rights*, when, as I passed through Paris, I learnt that new regulations were in preparation for the *Caisse d'Escompte*. I considered that this circumstance rendered a work necessary, in which the best principles upon the subject should be explained and rendered intelligible to every one, &c." Pp. 12, 13.

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† This truth must be very striking; for it is to be found at the two poles of the human intellect, if I may thus express myself.

We read in Newton: *Quietem, rem prorsus substantialem.*

We read in La Fontaine:

Le repos, le repos, trésor si précieux,

Qu'on en fit autrefois le partage des Dieux. (Note by Mirabeau.)

especially the prodigious expenses of the war in favour of American independence, had compelled the government to have recourse to considerable loans. This species of investment of money had grown into especial favour, in a country where the passion for gain is allied to excessive exuberance of imagination. Operations of this description were therefore not confined to the wants of the state. Side by side with the public securities, and, we may add, to their injury, appeared those of several private establishments which had sprung up, and drew large sums of money from the metropolis as well as from the provinces. Such were the *Caisse d'Escompte*, the Bank of St. Charles, and the Water Company of Paris. The first and last of these establishments were evidently of public utility; the second by no means bore the same character; but all three led to immense banking operations, and absorbed by far the greatest portion of the capital required by a multitude of more useful objects and appliances.

The *Caisse d'Escompte*, founded by Turgot, in 1776, had rendered important services to trade, by increasing the quantity of specie and its circulation. The rapid increase of its operations had augmented the dividends assigned to the shares, and the price, if not the real value of the latter, had risen, first in an equal, and subsequently in a greater proportion, owing to the manœuvres of a most insane system of stock-jobbing. In September 1783, the *Caisse d'Escompte* experienced



some embarrassment in its payments, and a dangerous assistance was imprudently afforded to it by the government. The decree in council of the 23rd of the same month, made bills of exchange a legal tender in liquidation of the notes, the payment of which in specie experienced a temporary difficulty. A rapid and extensive discredit was the result of this law. M. de Calonne, a few days after he took office, met it by an able measure: an order in council, bearing date November 25th 1783, repaired the fault committed two months previously. The stock of the *Caisse d'Escompte* again rose rapidly, and was restored to its former value. Stock-jobbing again set its fangs upon the shares of this establishment\*, and at the period our narrative has now reached, was at the climax of its activity.

The bank of St. Charles was instituted at Madrid, in 1782, by Cabarrus, afterwards finance minister to the King of Spain. Mirabeau justly observes†, it was surprising that in a country in which, with the exception of the momentary effects of a transient war, the precious metals from the New World were abundant, one of those

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\* The original price of the shares of the first creation was 3000 livres, and of the second creation 3500. Between November 23rd 1783, to May 8th 1785, the system of stock-jobbing had raised the shares to 8000 livres.

† These observations, the correctness of which is set off by the most striking and beautiful language, are developed in Chapter III of the work upon the *Caisse d'Escompte*, pp. 22, 23. They are quoted by Peuchet, vol. ii. pp. 348 and following.

establishments should be founded, which are necessary only in those states where specie is wanting. Besides this circumstance, of itself sufficient to make capitalists reflect, and besides certain suspicious similarities betwixt Law and Cabarrus, between *the system* and the bank of St. Charles, the latter being based upon imaginary profits arising from the trade of the Philippine Islands, as the former was upon the illusions of the Mississippi and Louisiana, prudent men ought to have hesitated to invest their money in an establishment belonging to a foreign country wholly independent of France, and having an absolute government ;—an establishment, in short, whose operations they could appreciate only upon simple hearsay, and by illusions, not reason. Stock-jobbing, however, seized upon the stock of the Spanish bank, the shares of which were more sought after in France than at Madrid. Their price was fixed in Spain according to that in France, and not in France according to that in Spain. The nominal value was only 500 francs, but they had already risen cent. per cent.

The Water Company of Paris had created shares in order to constitute its capital. Notwithstanding the evident utility of its purpose, and the skill with which it was conducted, it had at the outset committed some errors in calculation, whereby the shares, which originally cost 1200 livres, fell one-third. The government thought proper to assist this institution, by purchasing a hundred shares. This assistance appearing likely to

ensure a success originally doubtful, the shares rapidly rose, and stock-jobbing having monopolised them also, they rose to 4000 livres, and even beyond.

The operations of these three establishments at first occupied the attention of Mirabeau, who was constantly urged by some of his friends, anxious to obtain the benefit of his talents for controversial writing. These friends, being holders of much government stock, and having therefore an interest in overthrowing or abating all dangerous competition, suggested to him the idea of attacking the system of stock-jobbing, and exposing the public evils attendant upon it. They supplied him with the necessary materials; and they further hinted to the finance minister the advantage of obtaining the assistance of so powerful an auxiliary. Mirabeau was accordingly introduced to M. de Calonne, and it was partly in the interest and under the inspiration of that minister that he wrote his two first works on financial subjects.

In the course of five months he published five books on finance. I. On the *Caisse d'Escompte* \* (May 8th 1785). In this work he speaks so much of those he intended should follow, that he would have exposed himself to a charge of inconsistency and versatility had he not written them. II. On the Bank of Spain, termed

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\* 8vo, 227 pages, with this epigraph:

Jam dabitur, jam, jam : donec deceptus, et expes  
Necquicquam fundo suspiret nummus in imo.

PERS. Sat. II. v. 50, 51.

the Bank of St. Charles (1785) \*. III. Letter from the Count of Mirabeau to M. Le Couteulx de la Noraye, on the Bank of Spain, termed the Bank of St. Charles, and on the *Caisse d'Escompte* † (July 13th 1785). IV. On the Shares of the Water Company of Paris ‡. (October 2nd 1785). V. Reply to the Writer on behalf of the Directors of the Water Company of Paris § (December 10th 1785).

These several works, written with energy and often with violence, attacked the private interests of too many individuals not to arouse against the author much hatred, insult, and calumny. Imputations of ignorance were lavished upon him, but not one of his pretended mistakes was pointed out, nor one of his proofs controverted. He was likewise taxed with venality, and his

\* 8vo, 320 pages, with the following epigraph :

Ploratur lachrymis amissa pecunia veris.

JUV.

† 8vo, 117 pages, with this epigraph :

Vos opibus junctos, conspirantesque tulissem.

CLAUDIAN.

‡ London, 8vo, 36 pages, with this epigraph :

Pauvres gens ! . . . je les plains, car on a pour les fous  
Plus de pitié que de courroux.

LA FONTAINE, Fab. 7. liv. 12.

§ Brussels, 8vo, 116 pages, with the following epigraph :

Egens, ignotus, inquires, dum occultis libellis cuique periculum  
facessit, mox odium apud omnes adeptus, dedit exemplum, quod  
secuti ex pauperibus divites, ex contemptis metuendi, perniciem  
alii, ac postremum sibi invenère.

TACIT. Ann. l. i. c. 74.

accusers forgot that, in the interests of the government, which secretly encouraged but publicly disavowed him, and in those of a few bankers, ruined or having sustained serious losses, he was attacking and driving to despair opulent and powerful stock-jobbers, who would have paid him munificently for his silence, had he chosen to accept their money.

Nothing would be easier than to borrow from contemporary writers very ample explanations concerning Mirabeau's financial writings; and we could transcribe from these writings themselves, as well as from other publications of his, numerous extracts which would do the more honour to his patriotism and talents, as in the present day these casual productions, which were never republished, are very little known.

But this last consideration, the very oblivion into which these ephemeral questions have fallen, and our repugnance to extract from works already published, strengthen our determination to borrow nothing except from a source unknown to the public. In this we shall always persevere when the matters in our narrative can be treated with materials exclusively our own; especially when these materials effectually supply the place of works already published in Mirabeau's name, but which are not of an interest sufficiently permanent to render them worthy of republication. With reference then to these financial productions, we confine ourselves to the insertion, 1st, of some passages in a letter from Mira-

beau to his father, written three years subsequently; 2ndly, and as a rapid and substantial summary, entirely new, the first part of a bitter but eloquent letter written by Mirabeau, in January 1786, to M. de Calonne. This letter was written immediately on Mirabeau's arrival in Prussia; but the friends, to whom he forwarded it without keeping a copy, kept it back and would not publish it, notwithstanding the writer's urgent entreaties, attended with angry remonstrances, as is proved by his own letters and those of his friends, all of which are in our hands.

Mirabeau, in reply to an accusation by his father, thus expresses himself, in a letter dated October 4th 1788.

“ You said of me, father, ‘ He has debased his pen with the stain of venality. It is known that Calonne paid him; and people say, and will believe, that it is the same with Lamoignon \*.’

“ Mine a venal pen! When did I ever maintain contraries?—which is the character of venality. It is known that Calonne paid me. . . . Now, those who know this, know nothing. . . . Though solicited by all my friends, who were of my opinion, to take a share in their affairs; though excited by Dupont\* himself, to

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\* The accusation was false, as the reader will soon perceive; but had it been true, it ill became the Marquis of Mirabeau to make such a charge, for he gave his son no sort of pecuniary assistance, nor did he ever pay him his marriage pension.

† Dupont de Nemours.

whom I appeal, and who scoffed at me for not having secured 40,000 livres a year during the frenzy of stock-jobbing, I entered into no speculation, even when innocent. I have lived, in a very humble way, upon the produce of my labours, and with the assistance of my friends; but I have never staked a farthing at play, nor received the most trifling pecuniary present—although I, who weighed down, in some degree according to my will, the scales of the stock-exchange, could have sold my silence for any sum of money I chose to ask. Whether right or wrong, I have rendered considerable services to the finance department under M. de Calonne's administration. I can prove by authentic documents, 1st, that the work upon the *Caisse d'Escompte*, hasty and imperfect as it is \*, saved many honest people whom sharpers were about to dupe; 2ndly, that the St. Charles shares, which I

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\* In a letter to Mauvillon, Mirabeau thus speaks of his book on the *Caisse d'Escompte* :—

“ This book is very elementary ; and as it required to be read in a given time, besides the precipitation in writing it, there is to be found in it a little varnish foreign to the subject, and but few generalisations, because I should not have been understood, and I should have been cavilled at.”—*Letters from Mirabeau to Mauvillon*, pp. 16,17.

“ I confess that I consider the book on the Bank of St. Charles, which has been much less successful than that on the *Caisse d'Escompte*, as much better, more scientific, more orthodox, and, if I might be allowed to say so, as the true theory of public banks. It is difficult to believe that this work was written and printed in ten days. It is a feat of strength, perhaps, but the danger was imminent.—*Ibid.*

found at 900 francs, and which fell in a week to 400, cost the country fifty-four millions, and but for me, would, in a few weeks, have cost it three times as much. Lastly, my dear father, I caused a fall in the Philippines\*. I have thus foiled stock-jobbing in all its forms: I have checked that atrocious system which absorbed all the specie in the kingdom, discouraged all honest industry, and being at length grafted upon the Court, was preparing for the country an overflowing of new corruptions. So long as M. de Calonne was not a party chief, participating in the system of stock-jobbing, he was delighted with what I was doing, and he even supported me; but he never disbursed any thing more than the expenses of printing the book on the Bank of St. Charles, which he paid to the printer in person. When the minister became himself a stock-jobber, he wanted to impose silence upon me; but I spoke in a still louder voice. He then let loose upon me that mountebank, Beaumarchais†. You know the rest. My revenge being taken, (and it was only so severe and so deadly because they wanted to *debase me with the stain of venality*,) I consummated a rupture already

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\* The Philippines were the shares of the Company of the Philippine Islands, another creation of the banker Carbarrus, of which Mirabeau also pointed out the illusions.

† Beaumarchais, one of the Directors of the Water Company, at Paris, wrote in the name of the Company, a witty and measured, but ironical and malicious reply, which irritated Mirabeau to a pitch of fury.



known to the public, by writing to M. de Calonne a letter, such as a hired scribe never wrote to his employer. If you saw that letter, which Dupont will show you, any doubt upon your mind of my having put forth my real opinions and convictions, instead of a subject basely accepted in exchange for a degrading hire, will disappear in an instant \*."

It is for this very reason, and with a view to substitute this persuasion for the conjectures with which Mirabeau's memory is charged on the faith of his enemies, and from the fault of his biographers, that we insert in our text a part of the letter, or rather of the volume † alluded to by Mirabeau in the above letter to his father.

The reader will, no doubt, remark the bitter, and, at times, declamatory style of this letter, which being written a short time after the reply to Beaumarchais, resembles it in vehemence and anger. This style is explained by the deep impressions of the writer; by his conviction which outlived the change in the ministerial system; by the unexpected determination of the government, which, by its injustice and fraudulent manœuvres, offended Mirabeau's delicacy, and by arbitrary and dangerous measures wounded his patriotism. Part of his ire, we admit, may be

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to his father, dated October 4th 1788.

† The manuscript, entirely in Mirabeau's hand-writing, would fill 300 8vo pages.

attributed to the minister's desertion of him, after having supported and excited him to write. M. de Calonne, whether from weakness or from duplicity, having ceased to support him, perhaps drew up himself, or allowed to be passed by the Council, the decrees of July 17th and August 24th 1784, in which the book on the Bank of St. Charles, and the Letter to Le Couteulx de la Noraye, are censured, and ordered to be suppressed.

“ The moment has at length arrived, Sir, which I predicted and apprehended—that moment when my reputation, my principles, my safety, my honour, and, above all, the good of my country, command me to cite you before the tribunal of public opinion, and call upon it to judge between us.

“ After six months of vain attempts, useless counsels, and unnecessary labour, I find myself compelled to overthrow, in my own opinion, the throne I would willingly have raised for you in that of my fellow-citizens. Not only must I renounce the hope of all the good you might have done, but it becomes necessary that I should oppose the evil you are committing.

“ Would I were able to become your security, but you force me to come forward as your accuser. I would have wasted away my life for your success; I must now employ many painful hours to save my fellow-citizens. How, with the profound sense I entertain of your servile deference for perverse advisers, can I refrain

from endeavouring to wrench from your grasp the sceptre with which you would ultimately destroy our properties, and all the principles upon which they are based? . . . . Yes! I must try the effect of truth, reason, and patriotism in stopping in his inconsiderate career, a careless and corrupt minister, who has thrown the reins of the finance department loose upon the necks of blind ignorance and eager covetousness, and placed in jeopardy the honour of the government and that of the nation.

“ But why, Sir, are you such a minister? Why did chance bring me in contact with you? Why did your amiable qualities seduce me \*? Why did you

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\* Mirabeau never concealed his connexion with M. de Calonne. Among other evidence is the following passage found in his work on the Waters of Paris :—

“ The Minister of Finance begged me, urged me, nay, encouraged me to do it.” (p. 10.)

“ Afterwards, in the terrible work entitled “ Denunciation of Stock-jobbing to the King and the Assembly of Notables,” published February 20th 1787, and directed partly against the then palpable, and afterwards too notorious consequences of this Minister’s blunders, Mirabeau wrote :—

“ I have already attempted to spread information on these subjects; I was authorised, nay, urged to do so, and I think I have acquired a right to say that I have always used in this salutary mission the arguments of sound logic.” (p. 10.)

In writing his “ Denunciation of Stock-jobbing,” Mirabeau used in his text, sometimes in his notes, some of the facts, conjectures, and arguments, which the reader is about to examine. They are, in general, imitations and not repetitions; for if Mirabeau had repeated himself literally, we should have given, in fragments only, that part of the letter to M. de Calonne which we here insert. We

make use of me? Why, when you deserted the cause which you had put into my hands, did you impose upon me the duty of defending it against yourself? Did you take me for one of those thoughtless or dishonest men who may be ordered to fit to circumstances, their feelings and despicable talents? . . . . If such was your error, you are about to be cruelly undeceived.

“ However, Sir, by what do you justify having formed such an opinion of my feelings or disposition? When have I, in your presence, ceased to be myself? What truth have you ever heard me conceal or betray? Point out any period when manly inflexibility has ceased to dictate my writings and my discourse. Have I not a right to your esteem? . . . And I will preserve it, Sir, or, at all events, I will remain worthy of it, though at the expense of your enmity. As you have granted a law equally absurd, impolitic, and immoral, of which my friends—whom you consulted only in the hope of obtaining advice conformable to your wishes—and I, whom your indiscretion alone admitted to your confidence, have long since shown you the evils, errors, and defects, since, by this law \*, you destroy, as much

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cannot repeat too often that we shall not use things already published except in cases of absolute necessity.

We shall take care to give in our notes any of these imitations that may occur.

\* This refers to the decree in Council, rendered October 2nd 1785, “ appointing Commissioners for the liquidation of time bargains, and compromises of royal bonds or other stock,” in exe-

as you can, the good I have effected in this kingdom, ravaged by your want of skill and your cowardice ; as you have dared to try the effect of threats upon me, with a view of preventing me from continuing the lawful publication of my opinions and principles—now that you are in contradiction with yourself, and that truth is displeasing to you :—I shall prove to you, Sir, that I am a good citizen, and you a bad minister ; that you know neither what you ought to do, what you can do, nor what you will do, and that your late decree is a disgrace to the government, a scourge to public credit, and the destruction of all confidence between merchants.

“ But, Sir, although you have pursued me with persecution and insult, this letter is dictated by neither hatred nor revenge. With reference to the former, I was inclined to love you ; as for the latter, what more powerful avenger than yourself could your enemies desire ? I shall begin this address by showing you that it is necessary for my just defence. The history of our connexion is sufficient to prove this. I shall, therefore, dwell upon it long enough to show the contemptible weakness of mind you have evinced in an office which demands much more method and firmness than you possess.

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cution of the decree of the 7th of August preceding, which “ renews the ordinances and regulations concerning the Stock-exchange, and prohibits fraudulent negotiations.” (Note by Mirabeau.)

## “ MY CONNEXION WITH M. DE CALONNE.

“ You remember, no doubt, the first circumstances that made us known to each other. I was desirous of mixing a little good with the evils of an East India Company which you had created. I was not ignorant that your plan—conceived with precipitation, and intended solely to defeat the views of Marshal de Castries who, with good reason, had refused his consent to all arrangements of this nature, was the result of mere intrigue ; but I knew too well the influence of courtly power to be surprised that an India Company, which was a real usurpation of one department over another, should have been very imperfectly constituted. But as, after all, its privileges could be the mistake of only a small number of years, I should not have considered this establishment, bad in itself and worse in the details of its constitution, as a fault sufficient to make the country despair of finding any good in you, even if the first measure of your administration had made upon me a less favourable impression.

“ Few ministers can boast of so noble a debüt as you had, Sir. The injustice of violent and arbitrary cancelling, expiated and repaired by a renewal of the revenue leases ; paper money abolished ; a curse upon annuities pronounced by the legislator ; a loan better combined than was ever before known in France ; the sinking fund instituted ; public credit raised, supported, and increased :—all seemed to an-

nounce that you entertained correct views; and the extreme facility you had in appropriating the knowledge of others as your own, confirmed this impression sufficiently to entitle me to pardon for having yielded to the fascination and graces of your conversation. Strictly speaking, you had already quitted the right path. The retroactive decree of the 24th of January terminated by a piece of revolting iniquity \*, and led to those pigmy battles excited by the quarrel about the dividends, with which the public authority ought never to have meddled. This decree showed sufficiently that you were deficient in principle, in firmness, and, especially, in dignity. But several pretences, though very frivolous and scarcely deserving of excuse in a minister, seemed to give a colour to this great fault. Men †, whose ignorance and meanness were, perhaps, unknown to you, denounced, to the government, extensive frauds, immense robberies—a canker of dishonesty,

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\* This decree declares “ null and void premium bargains concerning the dividends on the Shares of the *Caisse d'Escompte*, &c.” (Note by Mirabeau.) Although the work upon the *Caisse d'Escompte* was written, in certain respects, under the influence of Colonne, Mirabeau, resolving to argue according to his conviction alone, devoted two chapters (VII, and VIII, pp. 70 to 110) to oppose the decree of the 24th of January; and, for instance, in page 82 he says:—“ Even the Almighty cannot make a retroactive law just.”

† The Commissioners of the *Caisse d'Escompte*, “ who had, nevertheless,” says Mirabeau, “ no mission from their constituents to demand a prohibition of dividend bargains.”—*On the Caisse d'Escompte*, p. 73.

in short, which threatened to destroy all the wealth of trade \* ; and the excess of your delicacy might have afforded you a sort of excuse in the strong resentment excited by suspicions unjustly cast upon you.

“ Besides, this decree was not your work ; the public voice named its author who, long ago, robbed us of the right of being surprised at any thing he did. In fine, I was preparing at that very time, upon this strange law, a criticism severe enough for me to be allowed to excuse any share you had in it. I had no doubt that you would withdraw it, and be the first to set that noble example, as prudent as it is generous, even in a minister of state, of retracting an error, and confessing an injustice while you are repairing it. In one word, I had hopes of your administration, and I was sincerely anxious to assist you with my feeble voice, both against others and against yourself.

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\* The commissioners deputed by the shareholders of the *Caisse d'Escompte*, declared that “ they considered it their duty to denounce to his Majesty an abuse which might endanger the fortunes of His Majesty’s subjects.” . . Upon which, it is to be remarked, as I have done in my work on the *Caisse d'Escompte*, that the amount of differences lost did not reach 500,000 livres ; which is proved by a detailed list of these bargains, in the collection of documents published by order of government. The sum total of dividends sold amounted to 15,400, and their ordinary price to 180 livres. The dividends were settled for at 150 livres ; thus, there was a loss of 30 upon each dividend, making a total loss of 462,000 livres, to be borne by about twenty individuals who, for the most part, had already made enormous profits by the rise they had produced in a great measure by purchasing these same dividends at prices they could never realise. (Note by Mirabeau.)



“ Such is the plain and faithful statement of my feelings towards you when I addressed you some observations upon the necessity of preventing the India Company from extending, beyond what its privileges warranted, a monopoly destructive of all industry, and of the national trade. This it would infallibly do, if you left to the discretion of its Directors the means of discouraging our merchants, ruining our manufactories, depopulating our workshops, and, as a consequence, the districts which derive advantage from these latter.

“ I know not your motives, Sir; but in reply to my letters you invited me to call upon you. Our first conversation, which was long and confidential, led me, for my misfortune perhaps, into a career in which, at least, I shall always preserve a pure conscience and a bold line of argument.

“ In this conference, you maintained an absolute silence upon your India Company; for all that related to it was already settled. Hostile to our friends and allies, tributary to our natural rivals, a tyrant, from its birth, over our principal national manufactures, this Company, which you intended should live by the privilege of trading to India, even before it had proceeded thither, was to open for you a new order of things, and become one of the calamities of your administration. Thus, it was unnecessary to speak to me of this institution, which never became a subject of conversation between us, except when I took to you the remonstrances of the Alsacian manufacturers, who proved to you, at a very

early period, that the charter of this Company betrayed paltry views of private advantage, instead of developing wise and useful combinations calculated to make us forget the error of its privilege.

“ But if, in this our first interview, you said nothing about your India Company, you expressed an earnest desire that I should endeavour to propagate information concerning different branches of political economy. From that moment, I appeared to you such as I have ever been, and you were then able to judge of the man whom chance had sent you.

“ ‘ If I write upon matters of administration,’ said I to you, ‘ I shall do so with freedom, precision, and energy. There are writers enough who have prostituted the power of written language in defending or protecting error : it is time to offer a purer worship to truth. Let not the government expect to find in the same individual the means employed by strong minds, combined with the resources of little minds. If you think that my pen can second your views for the public good, you will not touch my independence, which alone, by making up for my deficiency in talent, has hitherto insured me success.’ ”.

MISSION TO WRITE ON MATTERS OF ADMINISTRATION, AND TO CORRESPOND WITH M. DE CALONNE.

“ Nobody, Sir, better than yourself, is able to assume

every tone and every form. You earnestly applauded my honest roughness, and it was upon pledging your word you would never expose me to any other influence than my own conviction, that I consented to comply with your desire, and write on every branch of the financial department, which should appear to me deserving either of censure, or of the observations of patriotism. This is the only condition I ever made with you."

BOOK ON THE CAISSE D'ESCOMPTE.

"I was then preparing my book on the *Caisse d'Escompte*, the greater part of which I composed in England. My private connexions had enabled me to cast an attentive and searching glance at the false system pursued by the Directors of that useful institution. The most dangerous and most monstrous of principles was about to convert it into a nucleus of stock-jobbing. The price of shares rose higher and higher. Covetousness, which alone settled the price, drove back the point she aimed at, in proportion as she was about to reach it. The Directors of the *Caisse d'Escompte* had become connected with gamblers, who laid it down as a principle, that circulations arising from stock-jobbing were necessary to the success of the establishment, insomuch as they would fecundate the dividends more and more, and that, consequently, the value of the shares, bloated out by the discounts arising from the most furious

stock-jobbing, would contribute to the credit of the bank.

“ It could not be doubted that, in this state of things, the speculators, upon the rise of the shares, that is to say, men whose interest it was to multiply these operations without measure, would become entire masters of the *Caisse d'Escompte*; that the boldest and most inconsiderate among them, without caring for fortune, would be the most favoured; and that the praise bestowed upon moderation, good conduct, and a knowledge of business, would appear a derision. This bank of assistance, in a word, far from favouring our true means of prosperity, was in future to be nothing but the fatal leaven of operations hostile to the real resources of the kingdom.

“ These, Sir, and you are well aware of it, are the considerations which require a work on the *Caisse d'Escompte*. You are also aware that events have sufficiently proved the soundness of my doctrine, and the necessity of my book. Its theory is not my own; and how could it be? The man of genius \* who, in defiance of so many obstacles, so many detractors, and so many enemies, founded the *Caisse d'Escompte* in France, was not himself the inventor of that institution. We, and we almost alone in Europe, have reached that consummation of ignorance which rendered it difficult to

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\* Turgot.

found so necessary an establishment, although no city in Europe, except Paris and Constantinople\*, was without one. Thus, the theory of my work upon the *Caisse d'Escompte*, does not belong to myself; but I can do myself this justice, quite sufficient for my self-love, that but for me, but for my anxiety to warm with my natural energy, the conservative truths of good order, and but for my active ardour in giving them publicity, this important service would still remain to be rendered. Who knows to what extent imprudence might have driven these excesses, if the Directors of the Bank of Assistance had not been compelled to yield to the evidence of my observations? Thanks to your weakness, they have done so but imperfectly, and yet there is a great change in their measures.

“ It was necessary that, in this work, I should speak of the decree of the 24th of January—of that decree which is an eternal disgrace to those who solicited it, and an indelible stain upon the merchants who availed themselves of it, to decline fulfilling their engagements. This decree is a deplorable instance of what may be done for the destruction of the best principles, by the personal situation of a minister. I knew but too little of you, Sir, to suppose that after exciting me against some obscure stock-jobbers, you would desert me before

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\* This observation was made by M. Panchaud, in his speech at the inauguration of the *Caisse d'Escompte*. (Note by Mirabeau.)

their powerful protectors. I was informed, however, that such would be the case, and that it would be useless for me to seek your support against the indefatigable watchfulness of the foes of freedom and truth. I was, therefore, obliged to go and publish in a foreign country \* my work on the *Caisse d'Escompte*, and more than a month elapsed between my first conference with you, and the appearance of this book.

“ The noise it made, no doubt suddenly called me to your recollection. I was sent for, praised, petted . . . . . Only you desired that some passages might be cancelled relative to the decree of the 24th of January. I refused to cancel any thing, and, for the first time, you heard me pronounce these words, which, at this very moment, must vibrate through your soul :—

“ ‘ I will pursue, even to my death, every retroactive law ’ . . . . .

“ You may depend upon it, Sir, that I shall reli-

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\* “ We took a journey to Bouillon for the impression of the *Caisse d'Escompte*. The Princes Rohan and Guéméné were there in exile. They came to see us every day. The latter complained that he had been cheated by his agent, and had been himself accused of a desire to cheat every body. He begged Mirabeau, who promised to comply, to write upon this subject, and expose several iniquitous mysteries ; but we were dissuaded from it by our friends, who feared that the warmth which Mirabeau displays in all he writes, might prove injurious to the two Princes, and delay their recall.”—*Unpublished Memoirs by Madame de Nehra*.

giously perform this oath. The victory remained with me ; the distribution of my work was publicly authorised ; and if I did not obtain from you a promise to withdraw the decree of the 24th of January, I have at least this satisfaction, that you have never dared to quote it in any subsequent act of legislation, not even in that where you repeat all the ordinances relative to stock-jobbing and its bargains, nor in the retroactive law which you have just promulgated."

#### WORK ON THE BANK OF ST. CHARLES.

" It was at the very moment, Sir, of the publication of my book on the *Caisse d'Escompte*, that you requested me to write one on the Bank of St. Charles. I was then not aware that even so far back as February, you had received a short but prophetic note, pointing out the dangers and illusions of this establishment ; and I informed you that, during my absence, a merchant with whom I was intimate, had written upon this subject some very sensible remarks which a literary man was putting into form. You expressed a wish that I should write and publish a complete treatise upon the same question. It was to precede the law which you purposed rendering to prohibit the negociation of foreign stock ; and the success of the book on the *Caisse d'Escompte* had given me, you observed, a sort of mission, which the finance minister was bound to confirm. I asked leave to make known your intentions. The

moment they were known, I obtained the sacrifice of the work preparing by the merchants. You sent me papers from your office; the inspectors of commerce had conferences with me; four days subsequently, my manuscript was in your hands; and a week after, the work on the bank of St. Charles was published.

“ Never was an illusion more completely or more rapidly destroyed. The shares of the Bank of St. Charles were at 800 livres; they fell immediately. We saw them successively fall below 420 livres; and this fall alone put an end to the constant purchases which the French stock-jobbers were making in Spain to resell in France; for it must not be forgotten that the Spaniards were too prudent to cause a rise in their bank shares at Madrid, in the same proportion that they did at Paris. Thus, the last share of the bank of St. Charles would now be in France, if the price had not fallen in Paris.

“ Few citizens, I dare to say, Sir, have had the happiness of performing such a service to their country. Not only have I cured a fatal madness, and stopped the too rapid progress of our purchases in shares of the bank of St. Charles, but I have likewise totally prevented the importation of Philippine shares, now more discredited in Spain than even those of St. Charles, and which would have fed the fury of stock-jobbing with a new aliment the more dangerous, because a sort of systematic connexion had already been formed



between the shares of St. Charles, those of the Philippines, those of our own *Caisse d'Escompte*, and all negociable commercial effects—a connexion which, by establishing between them a constant action and reaction, rendered them all, whether good or bad, dependant upon each other. Perhaps the overthrow of this system, which sooner or later would have proved highly disastrous, entitled me to the gratitude of government. . . . How have I been rewarded for my trouble and exertions ?”

SUPPRESSION OF THE WORK ON THE BANK OF ST.  
CHARLES.

“You have at least allowed, Sir, a decree\* to be rendered, which suppresses my work on the Bank of St. Charles as the production ‘of one of those individuals who venture to write on subjects concerning which they are too ill-informed to be able to impart useful information!’ . . .

“I ILL-INFORMED †! I who published the original charter of the bank of St. Charles ‡, (a charter of which, to say it *en passant*, neither you nor your agents knew

\* Decree of the 17th of July 1785. We read elsewhere that Mirabeau expected to be deserted by the minister.

“I was convinced that the minister who had asked me to write this book, would never have the courage to allow it to be published, if I gave him time to be afraid.”—*Letters to Mauvillon*, p. 10.

† Denunciation of Stock-jobbing, p. 10.

‡ Pages 93 to 162 of vouchers inserted at the end of the work entitled, “On the Discount Bank termed St. Charles.”

any thing, nor even had a copy of it); also, the statement presented to the Court of Spain by the founder, and the prospectus published in France by the most devoted agents of M. Cabarrus\*. I ILL-INFORMED!—and not a better informed man has appeared to refute my book! I ILL-INFORMED! Why, to weaken, if possible, the truths I have told, it was found necessary to spread a report, so greatly have calumny and impertinence been relied upon, that I was in the pay of the speculators upon the fall, as if (I pass over in silence your entreaties and the infamy of such an imputation) those who invented this absurd piece of stupidity were not themselves speculators upon the rise—as if correct information and rectitude of judgment might not be found in men, induced, by the sole nature of the thing, to wager against the long continued success of those extravagant follies which have seduced even the most renowned among the bankers.

“I have been silent, Sir, concerning those degrading tactics by which you punish a man for the very work you asked him to write. For, is not the suppression of my work, inflicting a punishment upon me? And what an opinion concerning me would wise men form from the decree by which it was intended to stamp my book with infamy, if sad experience had not long ago placed them on their guard against the

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\* Pages 54 to 92.

natural meaning and the direct consequences of the words used by the government? I was willing to shut my eyes to this scandalous conduct too often resorted to by all governments; but I did more. Seeing your contemptible alarm at the appearance of a book which was, as it were, common to yourself and to me, I declared to you, that, if the Court of Madrid required a victim to expiate the offence of endeavouring to serve my country, I would willingly suffer myself to be taken to the Bastille.

“ Perhaps, Sir, from this moment I should have judged you: perhaps prudence should have urged me to remain at a distance from you; for the pretended confidence, and even the appearance of favour granted by a weak-minded minister, is a very heavy burthen, and endangers both the happiness and the reputation of the firm and independent man who consents to approach him. But, to an excitable imagination, how wonderful is the magic of those who decide upon the fate of empires! Seduction, confidential statements, or caresses, cost you nothing, if by them you can obtain the success of the moment, which is always as far as you can see; the horizon of your ideas never extends further. Thus, did you appear to feel, as strongly as I did myself, the impropriety, to say no worse, of the decree in council suppressing the work on the bank of St. Charles. But M. d’Aranda\*, the Court of Spain, and

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\* Spanish Ambassador at Paris.

the enmity of the keeper of the seals supplied you with as many excuses. 'Nevertheless,' you did not fail to add, 'is not the continuation of my confidence a sufficient reparation, if your self-love requires one?' At the same time, you appeared readier than ever to employ my pen; thus no sooner was the book of the 'ill-informed man' suppressed by a decree in council, than the minister of finance requested him to write another upon loans. Such a work was, in my opinion, of urgent necessity \*."

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\* The book on the bank of St. Charles did the speculators on the rise an injury that greatly irritated them. They revenged themselves by the most bitter accusations, and Mirabeau prepared a vehement reply, which we possess, but do not transcribe for the reasons already given. We extract only a few passages concerning the errors and misfortunes of his youth.

"Why should I condescend to analyze this declamatory jargon, or to refute the filthy and calumnious assertions vomited forth against the author of a work which, I admit, has been proscribed, but to which no one has attempted a reply?

"How would those against whom I have fought be relieved from care and uneasiness, were I to use similar weapons, which however, I shall assuredly not pick up from the mud to wield them in my turn. I owe an account of my private life to those only who are connected with me. Besides, such details are never of any avail with malevolent persons. And what care I for the opinions of the honest authors, hawkers, and distributors of printed or manuscript libels against me, all of whom I confound together in my contempt as so many base calumniators? I never had any connexion with them, nor could I ever have been tempted to have any. I have long since stated this to all honest men and to an impartial public. I know better than anybody else that I have had to expiate the offences of exuberant youth, and the sad consequences of errors

M. DE CALONNE REQUESTS ME TO WRITE A BOOK ON  
LOANS.

“ Though we have obtained peace for three years past, how far are we from enjoying its blessings ! Continually goaded by the want of money, the government

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into which circumstances drove me much more than my own acts ; I have had to repair the injury they did me ; for it is too easily lost sight of, in most cases, that youth does not form itself, but is formed by conjunctures. The nature of my expiations alone remains to be shown. This is henceforth the only account which I may be called upon to give ; and I say this with the more conviction, because I am myself devoted to that species of magistracy which is not only the most suitable to him who respects himself, but to which he has a right to belong, when, after acquiring knowledge and experience, he is able to express his thoughts in a manner to excite attention. \* \* \* \*

“ No ! I shall not lose the fruits of the civic indignation inspired by so much fraud and spoliation ! Before I lay down the cestus, before I quit a career in which I have always shown a pure conscience and bold arguments, I shall examine stock-jobbing itself in all its bearings. I will pursue it through its tricks, its turns, and its results. I will divulge its black perversity, its hideous turpitude. I will give the history of what it has been everywhere, especially in France, where the want of knowing its operations and the prohibition to write have rendered it so grasping and so fatal. This will be the last service I shall attempt to render our finances, and the year 1787 will not be over ere this work shall again make the calumnious and stock-jobbing fraternity resume their yelping. After this, I shall quit these ephemeral pastels, and venture to grasp the burine of history, which my feeble hands have long been trying to use ; nor shall my passage through this world, agitated by the ebb and flow of the passions of some few mortals, close before I have branded with the stamp of infamy still greater crimes, and more illustrious criminals.”

marks each succeeding year with fresh loans, which remove further and further the relief so often promised, and required by so many pressing interests. The rulers of the state seem to rest upon the idea, that the taxes are not increased. But what aggravation can be more dreadful than the indefinite prolongation of those which already exist? A slight mitigation of this evil, which is capable of disheartening the most zealous, would be to raise our loans with industrious and prudent economy. No doubt, the finest of countries is also the most fruitful in resources. But are we doomed never to calculate the latter, except in their lamentable connexion with immense debts to liquidate \*? Shall we never behold the riches of our soil flow upon the most numerous and useful class of those by whom it is inhabited — upon these real creditors of the earth and of nature? And how can we attain this great revolution, so long as loans, whether in their form, their application, or their influence, shall depend wholly upon the whirlwind of the metropolis? Here, people think only of making rapid fortunes; and the loans which the King commands, with grief, no doubt, are waited for and anticipated as spoils, which avarice is eager to pounce upon. They are wholly subservient to the inconsiderate opinions, excessive wants, insatiable wishes, and immeasurable ambition of the people of Paris. Men of business, who know of no wealth except gold and contracts, are the

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\* Denunciation of Stock-jobbing, p. 3.

sole arbiters of the interest which the nation is to pay. Can moderate pretensions be expected from such people?

“On the other hand, who is not conscious that circumstances are more serious and pressing now than they ever were before, whether from the calamities of a truly disastrous year, or from the fruitless exertions and murderous insanity of stock-jobbing? I had viewed these evils too closely not to be deeply affected; and as we must expect more from things evident to our senses than from reasoning, which supposes considerable attention, and the power of generalising or abstracting, I thought myself fortunate in being able to publish under the sanction of government, and upon a basis supplied by itself, calculations relative to loans, both to show what is to be expected from the different forms in which they are made, and to prove by results as incontestible as arithmetic itself, that annuity loans especially ought to be for ever prohibited, as one of the most formidable scourges that could ever afflict the kingdom and its finances. . . . I should have fulfilled this duty, Sir; and perhaps it would have been better to have allowed me to finish this work, than to have made me write useless papers for you. But you had, no doubt, your reasons for not hurrying me. Since I saw you pay off, for the sake of empty boasting, in August last, that is to say, at the period when all proved our distress, twenty-nine millions of debentures,

bearing only five per cent. interest, and not at all pressing upon the Stock Exchange \*,—since, I have seen you increase, according to your good pleasure, all the pecuniary difficulties now bearing upon Paris, that vast mine of public credit—since, in a word, I have had an opportunity of appreciating your abilities, I can scarcely believe that you would have calmly listened to all I had to say upon the absurdity of annuity loans, and I have not the least doubt that you would have suppressed that work likewise ;—for it would have contained all the defects of my other works : it would have unanswerably established the truth, and rendered great mistakes difficult.”

LETTER TO M. LE COUTEULX DE LA NORAYE.

“ Meanwhile, my work on the Shares of the Bank of St. Charles, and even my personal safety, were clandestinely attacked, in consequence of the clamours of the banker, who was agent to M. Cabarrus. In this attack, I saw nothing but a natural opportunity of publishing the facts which took place every day, as so many confirmations of my theory. My letter to M. le Couteulx de la Noraye accordingly appeared, but not

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\* This incredible operation, the decree in council ordering it, the quackery and unintelligible neologism which dictated it, require a separate letter to themselves. But I am too far from sources, and even details. The perfectly correct result which I have pointed out in the text is sufficient to arouse the well-informed, or even the attentive reader.—NOTE BY MIRABEAU.



before I had given battle more than once to his patrons in order to obtain leave to publish it. You know this production, Sir; you had the proof sheets, and put notes upon them. You demanded that some parts should be cancelled; I acceded to your wishes in all those parts which affected only my self-love as an author, without injury to the subject. Again, I had a right to suppose that a writing, some parts of which a minister had requested might be cancelled before publication, had by that very circumstance received that minister's sanction, which, if it did not impose upon him the duty of supporting all that the writing contained, took from him the power of mortifying the author."

DECREE IN COUNCIL SUPPRESSING THE LETTER TO  
M. LE COUTEULX DE LA NORAYE.

" You did not think so, Sir. Another decree in council \* suppressed my letter, two months, it is true, after two editions were exhausted; and the decree contained such frivolous specifications, that M. de la Noraye himself will surely not add this morsel of eloquence to his personal archives, which contain his letters of nobility, granted on account of the 'deserved and hereditary reputation of his family:' such being the harmonious period by which your decree has consecrated the name

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\* August 24th 1785.

of Le Couteulx. But these delays and specifications, by shewing the difficulty you find in pleasing de la Noraye, the banker, without any offence to justice, are not calculated to render me insensible to the suppression of my letter.

“ But ought I to have expected that the government would praise the Directors of the *Caisse d'Escompte*, and confound this bank of assistance with the ignorant men, wholly guiltless of patriotism, who conduct it, whom my books have rendered more timid in the commission of evil, but who, having brought the institution to the verge of its ruin, would probably, without these books, have pushed it over the precipice? Could I, who had done some little good, behold with indifference this puerile and cowardly fear, which made you sacrifice a useful writer to adversaries who have not dared publicly to refute a single line of his writings? Ought I to have been persuaded that, as a minister, you had any interest in covering their want of power to reply to me by a decree which made reply unnecessary? . . . . . Far from concealing from you my thoughts and feelings on this subject, I declared to you that I would not withhold from the public any of my just reasons for dissatisfaction.

“ ‘ Either M. de la Noraye,’ I said to you, ‘ is a bad citizen, or I am a calumniator \*. Either the

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\* M. le Couteulx de la Noraye was the principal agent of Cabarrus, and at the same time held the office of Commissioner of the

Directors of the *Caisse d'Escompte* are very reprehensible as public men\*, or I am a pitiful reasoner, and a

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*Caisse d'Escompte*, over which he had the more influence, because his brother was its chief Director. In Mirabeau's letter to M. le Couteulx de la Noraye, this banker is accused principally of turning the *Caisse d'Escompte* from its true and legal object, in order to employ its capital in the operations of Cabarrus,—thus exposing the *Caisse* to serious danger. Mirabeau specifies as an instance, that in 1785, Le Couteulx exhausted all its specie, which compelled it to suspend its payments, and led to the decree in Council of the 23rd of November 1783, by the repeal of which M. de Calonne acquired great credit at the outset of his administration.

\* The *Caisse d'Escompte* having been overthrown by the ineffable stupidity of the very same men who still manage it, no sooner was it restored to life by the bold measure of M. de Calonne who, in the first days of his administration, destroyed the proper circulation, than the Directors of the *Caisse* turned their attention towards obtaining a rise in the value of its shares, as if such rise, which only betrayed their covetousness, was any proof of their talents. They abdicated all decency, and became public purchasers of shares and dividends. They created, beyond measure, paper for circulation, as a scaffolding for their scandalous jobbing; and lending themselves to all the excesses of the gamblers in the market, they successively encumbered the Stock-Exchange with shares of the bank of St. Charles, shares of the Water Company, and shares of the *Caisse d'Escompte*, at the most extravagant rates. They threw the greatest discredit upon the royal bonds, which did not offer them any fictitious value by which they could impose upon the public. This stock of their creation having multiplied to an immense extent, soon rendered money scarce in the midst of abundance. It prevented the interest of money from falling to four per cent, the rate fixed by the very decree which instituted the *Caisse d'Escompte*. They drew all the capital in the country to the metropolis, to the great injury of our manufacturing towns, since the withdrawal of specie from the provinces, raised the rate of interest in the city of Lyons to 7 and

very inconsiderate writer. Ought I to leave the matter in doubt? No, Sir; I dare assert that the public

8 per cent. The strange devotedness of the Directors of the *Caisse d'Escompte* to the house of Le Couteulx, occasioned the exportation of fifty millions worth of our coined specie to be exchanged for the paper money of Spain.

To make up for so many misdeeds, what has this *Caisse d'Escompte* done for the advantage of the kingdom? Has it not treated with disgusting favouritism the letters of circulation, and the engagements of its Directors, to the detriment of trade, and for the benefit of a truly scandalous system of stock-jobbing, which could only throw discredit upon all public stock? Has it favoured, in the slightest degree, the last loan? Has it assisted the provinces or the sea-port towns? Has it attempted, by circulating its paper through the interior of the kingdom, to obviate the useless and constant conveyance of specie in all directions? Have not the interests of the nation in this respect been unworthily sacrificed to those of the directing bankers, whose private operations the *Caisse d'Escompte* now exclusively favours? And what might not be said concerning the stock-jobbing frenzy of these bankers?

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Behold the Commissioners of the *Caisse d'Escompte*, who solicit, without requiring it, without a motive, and obtain by base calumnies, and culpable manœuvring, a decree, the consequences of which are deplorable. This decree has created and protects a band of pick-pockets, whom the bankers, in their thirst of gain, dare not punish, and who have been increased by the decrees of the 7th of August and 2nd of October; thanks to the impunity with which these rascals thrive in spite of their infamy.

\* \* \* \* \* Behold, the body of Directors who, after having infested the market with their paper, to such a degree that the *Caisse* can no longer suffice to discount them, demand from the Minister of Finance an aid of from eight to ten millions, under pretence of assisting the Stock Exchange, which means, probably, assisting the holders of the engagements of Messrs. Le Couteulx, who have

good and the truth are under too many obligations to me. To suffer myself to be humiliated for serving them, would be betraying them.'

"The only mode in which you defended yourself was, by endeavouring to deceive me once more by persuading me, as you did, when a book on the bank of St. Charles was suppressed, that this new decree in council had also been surreptitiously obtained from you by the keeper of the seals, and that you had even softened its bitterness. Thus you softened the bitterness of a decree surreptitiously obtained from you.

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lent their signatures in support of the shares of St. Charles. Thus, we begin by purchasing fifty millions' worth of shares of the Madrid bank, which robs us of specie to that amount; then the *Caisse d'Escompte* begs the assistance of government to aid those who had a hand in sending away these fifty millions with a greater amount of cash than they possess, or have been able to procure . . . . . What a strange inundation of covetousness, stupidity, and impudence! This sketch is sufficient (and how many more touches could I add to it!) to enable the public to judge whether such men, whether such Directors, deserve that the Minister of Finance should condemn himself to the contemptible weakness of deserting the work of the man he had himself sent forth against them. Would it not have been thought that he would have taken advantage of my success, and of the public indignation I had excited, to free our trade and the bank from this contemptible, though dangerous mob; and supersede an incomplete and badly-constituted establishment, by an institution more useful, more extensive, and possessing greater resources, means, and facilities, and destined, more especially, to strive towards the reduction of interest, which is the first and greatest of blessings in a kingdom wholly agricultural and commercial?—(NOTE BY MIRABEAU.)

‘ But, after all,’ you several times repeated, ‘ what is a decree in council ? ’

“ What is it ?—Alas ! Sir, no doubt the number of these decrees, so contradictory to each other, their inextricable confusion, and the certainty that they are often obtained by intrigue, weaken them in the public opinion. But this is a great misfortune, for decrees in council are laws of administration, and the evils they may produce threaten our very existence, for only a few citizens can elude their operation.

“ Be this as it may, the moment you took upon yourself, a second time, to suppress one of my works, an eternal barrier sprang up between us, and all confidence was thenceforward impossible. The man who can do without self-esteem, has never the courage to show, at any personal risk, esteem for another.

“ But if reason severely condemns the weakness in a statesman because such a defect excludes all public virtue, and is sufficient of itself to extinguish the most brilliant talents, this weakness, by imparting a sort of amiable facility, gives to a minister powers of personal seduction, provided he is a clever man. You are very clever, Sir ; clever enough to deceive yourself as well as others. People too easily believe that you comprehend what you know, and that you know all you listen to with a sparkling of your fine intellectual eyes, and that you may easily be brought to do that which has been proved to you to be proper. But people are

quite mistaken. Wholly occupied in assuming a bodily and intellectual attitude favourable to your self-conceit, in increasing the enjoyments of your vanity, which is the least substantial of vanities,—in escaping from the difficulties of the moment, in thinking how you shall contrive to remain a minister to-morrow, without knowing how you shall be one in a week,—you require expedients, not advice,—trumpeters, not friends,—praises, not the truth. Provided your society, I had almost said your coteries, flatter you, and that those who beset you are not ill-tempered ;—provided your indescribable levity is amused, and nothing tears you from your pleasures, the affairs of state go on fast enough ;—you delay urgent business for whole months ; then you settle in an hour that which requires the most deliberate attention, and the deepest meditation. In a word, he would be framing a romance to deceive himself with, who believed that you had any other combinations than those of intrigue, and those arising from the interests of your petty passions . . . . I am well aware of this at present ; but I was not sufficiently so two months since, for the illusions you had cast over me were not entirely dissipated. Too deeply offended to condescend to dissimulation, but far from being of an implacable nature, and being always seduced by the attractive familiarity arising from an intercourse with you, I would still have waged war for you on the first signal. A danger, a new object of public advantage, a word demanding my assist-

ance or invoking my zeal, would have proved sufficient."

PLAN OF M. DE CALONNE FOR CANCELLING TIME  
BARGAINS.

" You pronounced this word in the overflowing of your confidence. After speaking of the embarrassments of the Stock Exchange at Paris, and of your own embarrassment in being obliged to interpret your decree of the 7th of August, you expressed an intention of cancelling all Time Bargains.

" ' It was the only mode,' you observed, ' of putting an end at once to the embarrassments of the Stock Exchange. Those about you advised the measure; the majority of the merchants demanded it; but your mind was not made up, though you inclined towards the simplicity and rapidity of this expedient.'

" I was struck, as with a thunderbolt, and all my illusions concerning you at once vanished. My personal cause disappeared; I saw only the danger that threatened the public weal, and I tried every thing to dissuade you from so fatal a project. I pointed out to you, with extreme distinctness, that no act of violence could stand in lieu of the progress of time, which alone, by carrying back the discredited stock into the hands of the capitalists, would free the market both from shares bloated by stock-jobbing, and from those loads of bills issued to support them. I explained to you, on this subject, the



theory which will be found developed in this work, and which will be an eternal demonstration of your ignorance and incapacity. But it was more especially to prove to you how impolitic and perverse your intention was, that I employed all the energy of language I possessed.

“ ‘ To annul Time Bargains,’ I said, ‘ is to confound, in one and the same proscription, the gambling bargains of stock-jobbing with the most prudent, real, and lawful operations, and perhaps the most useful in every respect ;—it is assimilating equivocal gamblers—what do I say ?—even those who are totally dishonoured, with the most accredited and most prudent capitalists ;—it is coming to the exclusive assistance of a set of dangerous and despicable men, in nowise jealous of keeping their word. Honest speculators would consider a decree cancelling Time Bargains a dreadful calamity. Would not this alone be sufficient to make you reject with horror a retroactive decree, which already, and from the circumstance alone of its retroaction, which is always unjust, would select its victims by chance, and show partiality against the innocent alone ?

“ ‘ Why should the government disgrace itself in favour of an interest which can never be that of honest men—with the eternal crime of an iniquitous law, which, without even the robber’s excuse—necessity, would overthrow all notions of propriety, good faith, freedom, and equity ; would reward dishonest men in a direct ratio to the

amount of their iniquity, and punish honest and scrupulous men in proportion to the respect they showed to their engagements? What, then, has the government to fear, by leaving events to take their natural course? Have we reached one of those hopeless periods which are the real dissolution of society, and in which the excess of the evil leaves no choice of remedy? Will the national credit be in danger, if, for the sake of saving a few stock-jobbers, you refuse to sacrifice the honest merchants, who have really advanced capital? The ruin of a few stock-jobbers is of no importance whatever. That which is really important to the national credit is, that the ruin of no one shall be effected by a sovereign edict prescribing bad faith. Such ruin would be the more fatal, because it smothers the voice of experience, whilst the ruin that may be attributed to the folly alone of its victims, ultimately teaches wisdom.

“ ‘At the very time you are talking to me of the extension of trade, of the stability of public credit, of the scrupulous respect paid to all the engagements of the state, would you dare to promulgate a law forcibly cancelling engagements freely contracted, in order publicly to reward men who would dishonour their signature, and condemn, to the loss of their property, those who remain steadfastly attached to the imperious principles of morality and justice? What deeper and more incurable wound could you inflict

upon the national credit? In what part of the world would you be able to persuade any man of sense that the minister who presented such a decree to his sovereign for signature, was jealous of supporting the honour of the national engagements? Is it by cancelling, in virtue of a special law, private engagements, that you would set an example to the nation of that rigid probity, without which public credit would be only a snare, and trade a system of dishonour?

“ ‘ What an attack is this upon morality, and the whole of the social condition! To meddle with bargains which the law did not prohibit, is evidently taking from engagements of every kind their sacred character. Must we again witness those events and circumstances which display in man that which would never have appeared in him but for the combined effects produced by the overthrow of the hopes of all? . . . . My bargains are cancelled, and my advances are not even returned to me. All my property, and all my hopes, become worthless as oak leaves. I must needs take advantage of the law which destroys me, to rid myself of my creditors, who will not the less undergo the common destiny. I have nothing now—neither do I owe any thing. It is but fair that each shall bear his share of the law’s curse . . . . Thus, from argument to argument, from necessity to necessity, from abyss to abyss, supported by an insane and generally abhorred law, I am to become a citizen without principles, a man with-

out faith, a merchant without credit, notable by a scandalous proceeding, and a competitor of scoundrels. In such a case, a man shudders at his solitude, he is frightened at his own form, and in the torments of remorse, he looks for the fantastic train of false reasonings and base examples which help to beguile him. But the misfortunes of the guilty, and their crimes, are equally the work of an insensate administration, which, losing at once both its resources and its honour, denies to itself even the means of repairing its abominable faults ; for it would take centuries to regain respect and confidence.’ ”

“ Such, Sir, is in substance, what I said to you ; and this conversation, truly memorable, to myself at least, made the law about to cancel Time Bargains fall harmless from your hands. But this was effected by the fear alone which my zeal excited, and which, assuredly, would not have been limited to private remonstrances. Taking advantage of your extreme propensity to fear, I showed you that your personal ruin, and ignominious fall were inevitably linked with this measure ; and if you have modified your hateful project, it is solely because you dare not carry it any further. Were this not so—if I had enlightened your mind, or touched your heart, you would not, in your last law \*, have approached so near to your original intention.”

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\* Decree of the 26th of October 1785, which was the occasion of Mirabeau writing this letter to M. de Calonne.

## PAPER ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

“No sooner was this conference over, than I drew up a summary of it, which may pass for a work. I proved that the embarrassment of the stock-exchange had been greatly exaggerated to you, and would subside by the mere force of things, aided by a little assistance granted with discretion; but that even supposing circumstances to be such as had been stated to you, the application of arbitrary measures was only the way to aggravate them; and that, on this occasion, as on every other, in times of extreme embarrassment as in those of calm, there was no wisdom, nor prudence, nor address, nor policy, nor skill except in the strictest respect for property, good faith, and morality. I proved to you, in fine, that the same injustice attached to the plan of cancelling the bargains—and it was a more crying injustice because a partial one—and that the same consequences, and the same uselessness, would attach to the anticipated deposit of contracts, to a liquidation accelerated by violence, to all your retroactive resolutions; and that the nature of the evil required no other remedy than that of letting it extinguish itself in wise precautions for the future.

“Such, Sir, and I never concealed it from you, is the last service I wished to render you. Had you only hesitated on this occasion, you would have taught me sufficiently that all was to be feared and nothing hoped

from you. To have connected my fate with an administration without principles or morality, would, in my own judgment, have been an offence, almost an infamy. It was but too evident to me that a good citizen could no longer have any communication with you except to oppose your measures. For my own part, I had sufficient reasons to refrain from doing so, and to be allowed to remain silent ; and but for your last act, I would have tried to forget you, even to your very name ; but it may be said that you have wished to carry to the extreme of refinement the care of exciting and justifying my insurrection."

WORK ON THE SHARES OF THE WATER COMPANY  
OF PARIS.

"Not long ago I published some observations on the shares of the Water Company of Paris. This work bears my name. It is distributed openly and as matter of public notoriety, at my own house. Nevertheless the Lieutenant of Police, has thought proper to attribute the authorship to M. Clavière \*, whom he has sent for, expressed great displeasure on the part of the King,

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\* Etienne Clavière, a Genevese banker, and a refugee at Paris in consequence of the troubles with which his country was agitated. He is the author of several works on Political Economy, Finances, &c. In 1791, though a foreigner, he was attached to the Legislative Assembly, and was Minister of Finance in 1792. Arrested June 2nd 1793, he committed suicide on the 8th of December following, two days before the time fixed for his appearance before the revolutionary tribunal. He was born January 27th 1735. We shall have occasion to speak of him hereafter.

and commanded 'not to write upon matters of administration.'

#### MY EXPLANATION WITH THE LIEUTENANT OF POLICE.

"M. Clavière was much surprised at hearing such high-sounding terms applied to a pamphlet. Quite a stranger to all administrative questions, and even to the Water Company of Paris, he was not less surprised at being called upon to answer for a work on the title-page of which appeared the well-known name of the author, and one too who never conceals himself. Having given me intimation of this strange circumstance, I immediately waited upon M. de Crosne, and demanded an explanation of a proceeding of which, I really believe, not a second instance could be found.

"This M. de Crosne, Lieutenant of Police, that is to say, this minister of pickpockets, declared to me that, to say the truth, he had received orders to summon me before him,—make known to me the King's displeasure with reference to the pamphlet that had just appeared, and command me to write no more upon matters of administration without being authorised to do so, unless I would force the government to repress my indiscreet censures by severity; but having learnt that M. Clavière was the real author of the book, he had thought it best to send for him, fortunate in being able, by this transposition, to avoid the unpleasantness of making such a communication to me!

"Thus the King's order, if it ever existed — which

I doubt—was transgressed in every sense of the word. I was the pretended culprit—the King had named me, and he directed that I should be spoken to; M. de Crosne, however, spoke to another, and hung upon the head of the other the Monarch's threat, which concerned my head alone. M. Clavière who had not written any book, received an order to write no more books; and the functionary dared to assert that he pursued so strange a line of conduct, from deference to me; that to show me respect he had dared to suppose that I was so devoid of honour and delicacy, as to be eager to acquire celebrity by putting my name to works reputed bold—I know not wherefore—and capable of remaining silent and motionless whilst another was threatened with the danger I had myself incurred . . . . Oh! Ministers, Ministers!—What care you take to make the authority hated which is confided to you, to afflict the heart of an honest man, to strike him with dread at the sole aspect of your movements.

“I have shown elsewhere\* for what object I wrote the work on the Waters of Paris, and the true cause of the rumours which it raised. I have shown why, by insulting me, profaning the King's Majesty, and offending common sense and justice as well as reason, M. de Crosne attempted to disturb the tranquillity of an honest man, whose age, talents and misfortunes ought

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\* In the second part of the work entitled: “Reply to the Writer of the Directors of the Water Company of Paris.”.



to have made him respected by government \*. I have shown that my pamphlet applied solely to the juggling by which the jobbing was maintained upon the shares of the hydraulic steam-engines, and not the undertaking itself. I have brought home to the conviction of all, that the advantages of this undertaking were not only very distinct from, but diametrically opposed to, those of stock-jobbing.

“ And, indeed, it is of great importance to Messrs. Perrier’s establishment that the price of shares should remain moderate, in order that fresh advances, indispensably necessary to arrive at solid and permanent profits, may be more readily granted by the shareholders. The sellers of shares would, on the contrary,

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\* M. Clavière was one of the principal chiefs of the popular party at Geneva, whence he was banished by the Aristocrats, with the assistance of French bayonets, during the late revolution. He had the generosity to seek an asylum among those whom he was justified in considering his enemies †. Can the government, without dishonour, refrain from defending, I had almost said honouring, this man, instead of allowing him be troubled or humiliated? The Persians caused to be banished from the little Grecian republics the Citizens who kept alive there the love of freedom; but in their own country they honoured these men, freely confessing by the respect they showed them, that policy alone was the cause of the banishment of those patriots. They were not cowardly enough to seek to stamp the prejudice of crime upon men whose virtue deranged their plans. (Note by Mirabeau.)

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† Allusion to the severe measures taken in 1782 by France, against the parties which troubled the City of Geneva, and alluded to by Mirabeau in his letter to M. de Vergennes, already quoted.

mow down, in an instant, and at the expense of the dupes, the hopes of a whole century. To reach such a consummation they exaggerate these hopes, and would fain make people believe that they are giving an inexhaustible treasure at the cost of merely the expense of opening the mine. Such are the stratagems of stock-jobbers ; and this is what I opposed. My paper was therefore the natural consequence of the labours which you urged me to undertake ; and if I required a defender, it was no doubt the duty of the Minister of Finance to come forward as such.

“ But I must be equitable, and admit, that by justifying me you exposed yourself to a storm. Had you defended my paper and professed my principles, the courtiers would have asked you why you had before praised to them these very shares the fictitious value of which I was endeavouring to reduce. The answer might have embarrassed you. . . . However, Sir, this is mere, and perhaps even hazardous, conjecture. The inconsistency, in my opinion, is only apparent ; the reader, before he concludes the perusal of this writing, may perhaps explain it. Perhaps, also, when I have developed the motives and the necessary inefficiency of your decree, it will be discovered that you have been more consistent than you here seem ; that the patron of stock-jobbing at court is not less so in the city, and that therefore my work on the Water Company of Paris must have annoyed him much. . . . But, Sir, if such is the case,

where lie the resources of your own mind and those of your assistants? Why do you not propose to the King to purchase the whole undertaking, all the shares, at the price of four or five thousand livres? No doubt the purchasers at 3600 do not expect less from the royal munificence excited by your care. Assuredly you will then, at least as far as this business goes, have freed yourself from your engagements with the courtiers. I shall then be the person in error; and the hydraulic steam-engine company will only have to congratulate themselves upon the success of their *patriotic* establishment.

“ Be it as it may with regard to the plan I recommend, you cannot be accused, at least in the present instance, of cowardly or perfidious duplicity. You have thrown off the mask with rare candour, and this last circumstance will sufficiently characterise the nature of any future communication between us.”

MEASURES ADOPTED BY M. DE CALONNE RELATIVE TO  
MY PAMPHLET ON THE WATER COMPANY OF PARIS.

“ You, and probably you alone, being jammed in between the courtiers whose avarice you have led into error, and myself whose reflections and writings on stock-jobbing you had yourself excited, are the sole author of the cunning expedient resorted to by M. de Crosne, when he transmitted to M. Clavière the pretended commands of the King. But when you were

convinced that 'a word to the wise' was not sufficient for me, that my intolerant pride rendered explanation rather awkward for the Lieutenant of Police, and that with entire submission to orders, I bear very badly advice stamped with menace or a show of authority, you soon felt that I required more positive language, and you spoke.

"A man very dear to me \*, whose affection I possess, and with whom the only fault I have to find is his excessive weakness towards you, having so great reason to complain of you,—this man, whose reputation and the services he has done you, have rendered him importunate, and perhaps hateful to you, was sent for to your office; you there requested him to tell me—

" 'That the Queen is greatly displeased with me on account of my pamphlet on the Emperor's pretensions relative to the Scheldt.

" 'That the King is greatly displeased with me in consequence of my pamphlet on the Water Company of Paris.

" 'That everybody at Court is greatly displeased with me.

" 'That this latter pamphlet has brought the general displeasure against me to a climax.

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\* The Duke of Lauzun; Armand Louis de Gontaut, afterwards Duke of Biron; Lieutenant-general, Member of the Constituent Assembly, condemned to death by the Revolutionary Tribunal, and executed December 31st 1793. He was born April 13th 1747.

“ ‘ That you defended me during the two first days and deserted me on the third.

“ ‘ That you now learn that the stock-jobbers, dissatisfied with your decree, intended to charge me, or have charged me, to write against it, and to include in the same censure the whole of your administration ; that I had either done so or would do so in the most malevolent, seditious, and incendiary form ; that I was at liberty to make any attempt in this way that I pleased, at my own risk ; only you begged he would tell me how certain I must be that, if in future I gave the slightest ground of displeasure, not only you would not take my part but would have me punished as severely as possible.’

“ In truth, Sir, if the intention is deficient in justice or nobleness, the avowal is at all events remarkably sincere ; and I flatter myself that it is now easy to determine the reward to which those may look forward whose talents you employ, the moment their love of truth, or merely your imprudent thoughtlessness, places them in opposition with your petty measures, your petty intrigues, and your petty personal views. . . . But let us examine whether you are very sure of all you have stated.


“ ‘ The Queen,’ you say, ‘ is greatly displeased with me on account of my paper on the Emperor’s pretensions relative to the Scheldt.’ . . . What !—after a year has expired, after I have spent eight months in France,

almost constantly in her sight? after my name having several times made a noise which no doubt reached her? and is it with reference to Messrs. Perrier's hydraulic steam-engine and forty pages of figures on the shares of their company, that this august Princess condescends to express her indignation as applied to a work concerning the pretensions of her brother who has renounced those same pretensions? . . . This, Sir, is palpably absurd, and you alone, not possessing the courage to be brave either at court or in the city, and finding yourself in a rather awkward dilemma relative to the shares of the Water Company;—you alone have called to her recollection the work which she may have looked upon with the feelings of an affectionate sister, without my being blameable in her eyes as an observant citizen.

“What!—the King who knows that I have written with rare energy on even the most delicate matters—who has not disdained to read my works, and even to applaud them as the efforts of a good citizen—who has, I will not say forgiven, but even praised me for showing that the abominable use made of *lettres de cachet* is destructive of all law, all morality, and all equity; the King who, as you yourself have informed me, has expressed great satisfaction at the services I have rendered his finances; the King, a zealous friend to justice;—would he cast the thunderbolts of arbitrary power at the head of the very man to whose

writings he had granted his esteem, because this man expressed an opinion that the value given by stock-jobbing to the shares of the Water Company of Paris, is not the value given to them by calculation and reason? . . . . No, Sir, this can never be, and I am the more certain of it because the Count of Vaudreuil, who had the noble courage to lend the King the book on *lettres de cachet*, had no doubt the same courage to defend my pamphlet on the shares of the Water Company, as he would generously have considered it his duty to do, having a great number of copies. If, Sir, any stock-jobbing courtier has imposed upon the King's good faith, His Majesty must almost immediately have been undeceived; and if it is true that he entertains any prejudices against me,—you alone, whose allegations I have refuted, captivating as they were for your friends the courtiers—you alone, who find that my eyes are too good to leave me so near your trestles—you alone, have instilled into him these prejudices.

“What!—everybody at court is displeased with my pamphlet on the shares of the Water Company; and it has brought the displeasure against me to a climax! Why, Sir, we well know the small number of elect whom you have admitted to the distribution of the shares deposited in the royal treasury. These favoured beings are three or four particular friends of your own, and can scarcely be counted among the thirty or forty who are privileged to absorb the whole of your time as



minister of state. These three or four companions of your pleasures are in truth *every body* for you, but not for the Court ; and without offending the modesty of the courtiers, I can scarcely believe that you could purchase the whole of them for eight hundred shares of the water company of Paris. Our great lords bear a higher price, Sir. It is not a paper of figures, a tiresome pamphlet they have, perhaps, never read, which has ‘ brought their displeasure to a climax.’ This unreasonable exaggeration belongs solely to yourself, the indiscreet trumpeter of the shares of the Paris Water Company, you who, in some measure, have made yourself accountable for their success.

“ What !—you defended me during two days and deserted me on the third ! . . . But, Sir, if I am wrong, why did you defend me ? — if I am right, why did you desert me ? Is there not on your part either cowardice or prevarication ? Choose either, or both. . . . The word is bitter, Sir, but it is deserved : I will take only one proof in a thousand ; try to overthrow it. A well written pamphlet appeared a few months since, proposing a plan for distributing in Paris clear and wholesome water\*. This pamphlet was published under your very eyes at Paris, and with the sanction of the keeper of the seals. In this

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\* Plan of a bridge and of a hydraulic machine for a general distribution in Paris of pure and wholesome water, by M. de Forge, &c.



work, Messrs. Perriers' undertaking is much censured. The author decries in general the use of steam engines for giving water to great cities. He especially ridicules the absurd plan of conveying water into all or most of the houses at Paris. He enters into a learned discussion on the unwholesomeness of the water supplied by any establishment situated *below* Paris, and he promises, in this respect, 'demonstrations beyond a doubt, if he can obtain permission to publish them.' . . . Well, Sir, nobody complains, nobody has found fault with this work, nobody has asserted that M. de Forge was a bad citizen, or that his pamphlet was reprehensible. But I am termed a seditious man. The King and his Ministers, the Queen and her courtiers have, you say, cast forth their curse upon my head, and you yourself are preparing for me nothing less than very severe punishments. Why, in the same cause, so different a treatment? Why? — Because M. de Forge has attacked only the water, the undertaking, the means, the execution, the produce, whilst I have attacked stock-jobbing upon the shares of these hydraulic steam-engines. Now, this stock-jobbing has been excited by yourself; and it is from you that the courtiers have received these shares. Was it not, therefore, unavoidable that I should be deserted and condemned? Yes, Sir, it was: this is very clear to those acquainted with you and your connexions.

“What!—you have learnt, and you believe that the

stock-jobbers, dissatisfied with your decree, were to charge me, or have already charged me to write against it, and include in my censure the whole of your administration. . . . No Sir, you never believed this; for who has attacked stock-jobbing so strongly as I have done? Who has better deserved the hatred of the stock-jobbers? Who is further removed from them than I am? Is M. Le Couteulx de la Noraye no longer their chief?—if, indeed, you give up this office to that M. de la Noraye, whose combinations I thwarted, and prevented their success. I write for the stock-jobbers! Why, Sir, at this very moment when you have so grossly insulted me, when you have threatened my safety, when you drive me from my country, my pursuits, my affairs, and my friends; at this very moment, when I have so many reasons for pursuing you as my personal enemy; at this very moment I write against you only because I know you to be a stock-jobber in the city, and the patron of stock-jobbing at court; and because I have never doubted that a stock-jobber armed with authority, a stock-jobber holding a principal place in the King's councils, a stock-jobbing minister of finance, and consequently a party chief in stock-jobbing, is the most cruel scourge that Providence can inflict upon a kingdom like France. And I have written for the stock-jobbers against you! No, I would not have done so; I would not have written even against your decree; I would have

preserved, even to superstition, the remembrance of my connexion with you; and this remembrance would have sufficed to make me think that silence was almost commanded me, of whatever evil you might be the author, in a country where private morality is in eternal opposition with public morality. Yes, Sir!—it is so true, that I should have kept silence, that even after the strange message you were not ashamed to send me by my friend, I asked you in writing to grant me an audience, in which I might have an explanation with you and receive your word, as I would give you mine, if the exchange suited you. I obtained this audience after considerable delay, and at a time when I neither asked nor wished for it any longer. Then it was that the art with which you excused your conduct and discourse, and concealed your projects, showed me that you knew too well I had guessed you for you ever to forgive me, and how much my safety required that I should leave the country. Moreover, not only have I never deceived you with regard to my feelings towards you, but I could not even take upon myself to deny that I was about to withdraw to a foreign land.

“ I have reached this land, Sir, and am secure from your hatred as from your vengeance. Here I am, and I think my connexion with you is severed for ever. You have thrown down the gauntlet, which I have taken up, though less to defend against you my repu-

tation and my rights as a citizen, than the morality of legislation and of trade, the interests of the kingdom, the public thing, in one word—yes, the public thing: for being freed from all personal duty towards you, I should be guilty, in my own opinion, of all the evils you might inflict upon it, did I not endeavour to show, what is very clear to me, that the finances will be ruined by embarrassments of every description, if you remain any longer at the head of them, and that the most solvent kingdom in the world will, by your means, appear the very worst of debtors.

“To prove this, I shall examine the strange law to which you have given so much *éclat*, pretension, and importance; that operation which you consider the master-stroke of your administration. If I succeed in showing that this decree, which places you in evident contradiction with yourself, with what you have required of me, and with the character I assumed before the nation—if I show that this decree tramples equally under foot, reason and good policy, that it destroys public credit, and annihilates the resources of your department, I shall have sufficiently proved that I was justified in thinking I had a right to denounce your too fully proved incapacity, and your irremediable corruption. But I must begin by giving a just idea of the state of things which you have thought proper to oppose.”

We must pause here and our reason shall be heard.

Our mission is to write the life of Mirabeau, and, in this second part of our work, only his public life. It was necessary to mention his writings on finance, and we have given an account of them in his own words. With the exception of the energetic conclusion which we are about to transcribe, we suppress the remainder of this address, the smallest portion of which the reader has just seen, and give only a very short summary of the other developments which it contains, as they would interest none but the very small number of readers who have made the history and science of political finance matter of particular investigation.

In the sequel of his paper, Mirabeau examines “the nature and causes of the embarrassments at the Stock Exchange of Paris.” The minister, he says, imputes them to him, and he glories in them; for if he has caused a *crisis*, he has prevented a *catastrophe*. He defines the different operations of trading in the public funds. He distinguishes three sorts of speculators in these funds: “the capitalists, who act without effort by the simple employment of their real capital, that is to say, the money they can dispose of,” who, in a word, operate with ready money; next, “those who speculate through the medium of circulating paper, such as fictitious bills of exchange,” &c.; and lastly, those “speculators who buy and sell to gain the differences

in the prices of their time bargains." He explains the *modus operandi* of these different speculators. He discusses with much vehemence the decree in council of the 2nd of October 1785, which empowers certain councillors of state, as the King's commissioners, to liquidate "all the time bargains and compromises," the object of which—that is to say, the stock purchased by some and sold by others, must be previously deposited by the contracting parties, or, to speak more correctly, by the sellers, in whose hands the stock remains until payment has followed the purchase. He foretells the lawful resistance of the sellers, to whom both the spirit and the letter of the decree in council is evidently very prejudicial. In the frequent event of there being an impossibility of depositing the stock sold, he maintains that the sellers are always sacrificed to the purchasers. He inveighs against the arbitrary clause which empowers the King's commissioners to "regulate the respective interests of the contracting parties, on the conditions they shall deem most equitable." He asks whether a commission of dependent, removable, and irresponsible magistrates, ought thus to take the place of the tribunals which alone have cognisance of private litigations. He violently attacks the clause of the decree in council, which declares "null and void, time bargains and compromises," the titles and liquidation of which are not submitted to the commissioners.

Mirabeau, next discussed the preamble of the decree in council of the 2nd of October, and shows that the minister made an improper use of the King's name and authority, and even of the treasury guarantee, by applying them to private operations. He ought, says Mirabeau, to have left stock-jobbing to its own resources. It is "lawfully permitted in Holland. and completely tolerated in England, though, for other reasons, the law prohibits it in this latter country. To make the government interfere in a direct form, to prevent thousands of bargains contracted on the faith and signature of the parties, to change the period of payment, and alter the conditions in order to ruin one class of persons and enrich the other," is an abominable and disgusting iniquity. "However," continues Mirabeau, "your decree in council has produced no result. Honest and enlightened merchants, jealous of their honour, did not require it. They have endeavoured to do without your commissioners, who, I apprehend, have not received a single compromise between any two individuals sure of each other's probity.

"Further, none of the payments to be made have been secured by this commission. Either the debtor has given no security, and his situation and that of the debtor remain precisely the same; or, if he has furnished security, the want of legal form, which the commission cannot obviate, places such security in a very equivocal light, for it is subject to the rights and claims

of third parties absent, which also detracts from its value. The commission has felt its own inefficiency, and how greatly its duties further cramp an authority having neither law nor right. Those who have resisted this authority have obtained from it whatever they chose to demand; and it has often destroyed its own work. He who expected equitable arrangements from it, has been deprived of such arrangements by the very authority which at first declared in his favour, and has sometimes ultimately fallen a victim to the most shameful manœuvres."

We here close our summary, and proceed at once to the conclusion of this long letter to M. de Calonne.

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"Such, Sir, is the effect of your commission, up to the present time. Would to God I were mistaken! Would to God I could believe that your conduct to me and my resentment have misled me! With what eagerness would I make, I do not say a sterile disavowal, but the sincere declaration that I deserve a punishment more striking even than that which ought to be inflicted upon you; and assuredly this would not be treating myself with indulgence.

"But, alas! in your administration, indications of what we must expect from you are but too certain. What shall we see, if, by an impossibility, intrigue and favour maintain you in office after this exposure of your pacify? What resources will your silly adv



to raise you in the public estimation? . . . . Miserable lotteries to convert our capital into chances, and the royal treasury into a gambling academy? . . . . A return to annuity loans, under whatever name you may disguise them, notwithstanding the solemn renunciation of this hateful squandering, made not two years ago? . . . . An accumulation of services to devour by anticipation revenues not yet in existence? . . . . An increase of the already too numerous body of farmers of the public revenue, of managers and receivers of every description, who, in exchange for paltry advances of the same funds which they have already lent in a different form, will acquire a right to devour the last remains of the people's substance?

“ By such wretched means you will perhaps prolong your precarious administration for a few months—between the assistance of usurers and the dissipation of courtiers. But when the last and sad after-crop of your ministerial harvest is consumed—when general mistrust makes the holders of treasury bills refuse to renew them—when all public and private credit, as regards the King's finances, is exhausted—what will you do? Will you conjure up the ghost of the execrable Terray? . . . . But I pause. . . . . The reader must already blame me for predicting the misfortunes which your administration would infallibly produce, if it could last. But let him fear nothing: your dismissal will prevent any such misfortunes; or, 'if you remain in

office until they begin, the King's love of his subjects will not suffer you to carry them to a consummation. Your successor will make a great and memorable example of you ; to the very last you will have remained the phoenix of our finances, and credit will rise again from your ashes.

“ What still remains for me to do?—or rather, what have I done? What fruit shall I gather from an attack which, in the timid language of egotism that will soon destroy the little virtue we have left, will be termed ‘ audacious?’ . . . . What fruit? . . . . Either the fall of an unskilful, if not a perverse minister, who is ruining and dishonouring the nation, or else my own proscription! I have weighed the alternative, and accepted its consequences without fear. . . . What should I do in a country where the public authority would be more powerful than justice and truth supported by great courage?

“ Let it not be thought, however, that I condescend to justify myself for having raised my voice in defence of morality and the public thing—amid the consternation of the merchants, and the concert of praises uttered by base flatterers, at every abuse of authority. Shall it be tolerated, that any man shall ruin France by his ignorance, his want of application, and his frivolity? This man, loaded with an odious reputation, acquired with *éclat*, in an age when the dawn of knowledge should have been sufficient to induce his rejection of

an office offered to him by tyranny \*—this man, who, by the most tortuous paths, and even by the terror of his name, has reached the helm of state in the most important branch of its administration, would by his stupidity announce to us a return of the greatest calamities! . . . . And another man, without any interest, free from intrigue, and having no power but that of reason, no means but his courage, belonging to no party but that of the public good, having no motive but the imperious instinct the invincible desire to sacrifice himself to great and useful truths :—shall this man not attempt to save the nation, undeceive the sovereign, and place upon the head of the guilty minister the full weight of his corruption and incapacity! . . . . I shall not hesitate to do so ; if I did, I should insult the King, the age in which I live, and my country !

“ Let the King beware ; he cannot put an end to the career of this minister too soon, or even soon enough ; for the incapacity of a comptroller-general being once known, may endanger public credit, the decline of which is more rapid, and more difficult to stop in proportion to the former impetus of its elevation, and to the increase of strength daily acquired by that of rival nations. What do I say ? Public credit must be completely annihilated, if the finance department remains in the hands of a minister without capa-

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\* An allusion to the part, not cruel but crafty, which M. de Calonne took in the celebrated lawsuit of La Chalotais.

city. In such an office, talent is sufficient to inspire confidence, which is the only source of credit ; talent is sufficient to satisfy the public opinion, because in all public duties talent excludes dishonesty, whatever be the personal morality of the individual performing them. This is the reason why, notwithstanding your noble exploits in Brittany, if your appointment alarmed for an instant those who believed in the foulness of your heart, your first measures did not the less restore public credit, because they led to a belief that you possessed talent—the real virtue of your department.

“ But at present, when it is shown that your powers of mind consist solely in facility of speaking and gracefulness of language, your talents in the art of never taking a decided step, and in obtaining the suffrages of people of the world by the indefatigable complaisance with which you devote the whole of your time to them ; that, in a word, you have no capacity, that you are unacquainted with even the elements of your calling, and its very language,—I ask, what we have left at the end of one of the most disastrous years that Providence has given us for many years past—at a time when political events threaten us with more than one difficulty in our foreign affairs—when our debts, our embarrassments, and our expenses daily increase in the same ratio in which our resources diminish with the decline of the public confidence, and the decrease of specie, capital, and industry—at a time, too, when the

country has reached the promised term of a tax which the King swore he would not prolong—when the greatest part of the revenue will not enter the treasury, and the remainder be necessarily exhausted in indemnities, on pain of striking with barrenness a territory inexhaustible by any other calamity than that of the King's exchequer, which has drained it to the last drop;—under such circumstances, what have we left as a security for your ministerial operations? That profound immorality which, for thirty years past, has been imputed to you by the whole of Europe, which the recollection of La Chalotais' glorious name still attests, and which even your accomplices have never attempted to gloze over, except by lauding your grace and your amenity, more fatal to the glory of your present administration than your past errors and your recent blunders. . . . Really, Sir, if it be true that you are not cruel (for to be cruel presupposes a certain strength of mind, and all strength, of whatever kind, is denied to you, who possess nothing but the passions of little minds—despotism and vanity);—if it be true that you are not cruel, it is not less true that every principle of good faith, of fidelity to your engagements, of respect to property and freedom, is entirely unknown to you. And yet it is you who hold the great chain of trade, of public engagements, and of every species of property. Such, I attest, Sir, is the dreadful idea that fills me with alarm for the public thing; and this sort

of fear, a real stimulus to the courage of a good citizen, has, much more than the personal injury you have inflicted, determined me to take up the pen.

“ The example I set is a great one ; it is dangerous, no doubt, but it is great because it is dangerous. Virtue supposes strength, glory supposes peril ; it is this which constitutes the only merit that can be attributed to me. . . . . What would become of the universal race of the great human family, under the repeated attacks of prejudice, ignorance, and despotism (three words synonymous), if nature did not sometimes produce men able to embrace undertakings requiring energy and exposure to danger !

“ Among such undertakings must no doubt be included that of indefatigably claiming the rights of the public thing, in a country without a constitution and without freedom ; that of striving and co-operating in the spreading of knowledge. Few projects are more dangerous, but none are more deserving of interest and esteem ; for it is from knowledge alone that we must expect the return of the kingdom to a sound state, that we shall derive the true glory and prosperity of the nation. A minister, even when able, has no influence except during the time of his action. Then it is that he almost invariably finds nothing but an effeminate and indolent weakness in those who desire good, whilst those who desire evil oppose him with prodigious force, because his measures tend to their immediate and

personal detriment. He must struggle against the torrent, and sometimes allow it to drift him along, in order to weaken its resistance. Nevertheless, if the man passes, and with him his plans, his views, and his efforts, the knowledge he has brought remains ; it ferments, germinates, ripens, and his smallest crop supplies seed for future and more abundant harvests. The office of instructor is therefore a noble one ! Yes, Sir, it is sufficiently noble, for ambitious subordinates, for courtiers ambitious of ribands, of governorships, of ministerial office, to find an interest in consulting, listening to, and observing the man of knowledge, who will and can instruct his contemporaries. . . . I boldly avow that I am a pretender to this noble prerogative, and perhaps I have some right to acknowledge this kind of ambition, which pleases my heart without surprising my mind. Every minister whose intentions are pure will encourage me ; for I cannot but be willing to second him. The others will look upon me as an implacable enemy, a contention with whom they will soon bring to a close, if ever I fall into their hands.

“ But if I fail on this occasion, let not those good citizens be discouraged who cultivate their thoughts, and look upon the art of writing as the guardian of the rights of mankind ; let them be assured that my failure proceeds only from want of talents, or from an injudicious choice of circumstances. Let them console me

by their imitation of my acts ; and let them be assured, that sooner or later unworthy ministers will be overthrown, if any one dares to come forward in his own name, and publicly expose their iniquities. In vain will these demigods bellow, in vain will they threaten, in vain even will they strike. Opposition will always lend power to truth, and the pretended shackles which they think they can impose upon it, are only springs hastening its progress. If such people would but refuse being the accomplices of any evil whatever ; if they would dare to divulge all they see ; if they made it their duty to carry the discussion of all the great interests of society before the tribunal of universal reason ; public opinion, seated upon an invariable foundation, would soon govern Kings, who would then be all-powerful for the sole advantage of their subjects, which is the only source of advantage to themselves.

“ But I shall not fail. Our sovereign will feel that some attention is due to a man who, in so serious and open an attack, has not used against his minister the language of ignorance, nor the chattering of presumption, nor the venom of evil-speaking, nor the poison of calumny ; who has laid down facts, established principles, examined arguments, and placed within the capacity of every attentive reader, a question of such magnitude, that it is important for the government to retrace its steps, if it has lost its way. To enforce silence upon such matters by arbitrary power, or



violent measures, is not governing, but lying down to sleep upon an undermined spot of ground, until the explosion takes place which is to scatter the severed limbs of the sleepers.

“ Far for ever from an august prince, distinguished by soundness of intellect and elevation of mind, be the stupid and hateful maxim, that simple citizens ought to be prohibited from scrutinising the acts of the government. This impious axiom has been dictated either by the delirium of tyranny, or the terrors of mediocrity. What might not be its consequences? What error would not be holy? What crime would not be sacred? Did you not yourself, Sir, think it necessary formally to give your predecessor the lie in your very first decree in council, after you took office? And did the sovereign authority thereby become less powerful or less revered? Certainly not. It is well known that ministers may deceive themselves; nor are we unaware that they can deceive others; they alone are answerable for their own mistakes, which perhaps is more important in an absolute than in a limited monarchy. Where freedom does not exist, courage is wanting, but fury sometimes breaks forth. Nobody writes against ministers, no one complains of the government, but all consider how they can destroy it, and prepare to do so. These successive fits of torpor and of frenzy, are not suitable to Frenchmen. It is not from the throne, Sir, that they require victims;

they wish only to cherish the sovereign authority, which never appears to them more paternal, more worthy of their blessings, than when it retracts an error committed by one of its agents. But how would it ever discover this error, if the people were not permitted to seek publicly to know what is just, and what is not—what is evil, and what is good? What minister—I call upon all of them to answer the question—would venture to say: ‘I, and I alone, know everything; I, and I alone, cannot make a mistake. Or if I did, why need I care? It is not the public good, but my own office, that I care about. I will not allow the public interest to be ever understood; I will not allow that it shall ever rally the hearts and the strength of the people. I want these ignorant people to be carried away by blind passion against their own interest, and that of their sovereign; for my interest is that both should be silent while I act. May every other interest perish!—May every heart be closed, every tongue palsy-stricken, every hand chained! . . . .’

“Such must be the language of a minister, who would venture to impute to me as a crime the freedom of this letter; but such language would not be tolerated by our King. He is a constant worshipper of morality and justice, and would not condemn me for defending their cause, which is his own, since, as he is the guardian and chief of all kinds of property, his first duty is

to establish universal and inviolable respect for property. I have not attacked his authority, but have served his power. I have not maintained the cause of stock-jobbing, as some people would fain represent, but have supported the cause of property, which is the foundation of all justice, of every social right, the sole and inexhaustible source of the prerogatives of the crown. Who would dare to deny that an act of legislation, like that which has just torn five hundred millions' worth of engagements from the safeguard of the courts of justice and the laws, could not, by the same right, by the same means, and upon the same principles, overthrow the rights of all, and force all our social order into combustion?

“Giving such an alarm to the nation with reference to a recent law, and bringing such heavy charges against the minister who promulgated it, would be a truly culpable act, provided this alarm and these charges were unfounded; but the moment their truth is incontestable, the fact of sending forth such a law, and of making such fearful things lawful, is committing that worst of crimes—treason against the nation. Thus, Sir, you are profoundly guilty, or else I have horribly belied you. This is the question between us. The most ardent of my wishes is to have it decided; and I swear, upon my honour, that I shall always be ready to appear and yield myself a prisoner, the moment the

King will allow his tribunals to determine whether I am a frantic calumniator, or you a prevaricating minister."

The long developments in this letter fully explain, as the reader has already perceived, the occasions and motives of the several writings, by Mirabeau, on matters of finance. All are directed against stock-jobbing, which, by giving an exaggerated value to the shares of the different joint-stock companies, held out a bait dangerous to families, withdrew much capital from the public funds, and more from trade, industry, and agriculture. These different works are necessarily repetitions of each other in a certain degree, as they treat of similar questions, state similar facts, draw similar inferences, foretell the same consequences, and tend to the same object. It is therefore unnecessary to give any further account of these writings, more especially, as at the distance of half a century, the questions they embrace would inspire but little interest and their discussion be out of date. We consider ourselves bound, however, to make a sort of exception in favour of the last work, because it applies to a subject of a more permanent nature than the others; and because the reply to it has not been forgotten, owing to the celebrity of Mirabeau's antagonist.

We shall, therefore, before we conclude the present Book, dwell an instant upon the two pamphlets

relative to the Water Company of Paris, which he published in 1785.

In these works he again attacked the disgraceful practices of the stock-jobbers, who had already tripled, and wanted to increase tenfold, the original price of the shares of an establishment, no doubt useful, but the greatest improvement in which could never, under any circumstances, justify such foolish calculations and realise the expectation of so prodigious an increase in the value of its shares.

This was pointed out in the clearest manner by Mirabeau in his first pamphlet, though in a style somewhat violent and declamatory. A reply appeared from the pen of Beaumarchais, written with much address, talent, and moderation of language, but with great malignancy. He begins by representing Mirabeau as "given up to speculators known to have a great interest in procuring a fall\*." He then attempts to refute Mirabeau's calculations and objections; and concludes with an affected lamentation "at seeing a man of such splendid talents devote his powerful pen to the interests of parties to which even he does not belong. It is for disreputable advocates, indifferent to the choice of subjects, to plead a bad cause. The eloquent man has every thing to lose when he ceases to respect himself; and this writer is very eloquent†."

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\* P. 1.

† P. 53.

The denials, the arguments, the jests, the pretended circumspection, and even the praises of Beaumarchais, roused Mirabeau's inflammable temper to a pitch of fury. He did not perceive that the attack he had made was considerably more insulting than the defence. Before he wrote a rejoinder, he risked a step which we cannot but term ridiculous: he summoned the Water Company to disavow their defender on pain of being made responsible for his assertions. They received this application and disposed of it with the most insulting indifference. Mirabeau then entered the arena, and the choice of his epigraph, which we have already given, sufficiently announced an insulting personal attack.

He began by disavowing the imputation of having embraced the cause of the "speculators on the fall," admitting nevertheless\* that not thinking he endangered the interests of the public by feelings of sympathy for private interests which chance might have mingled with them, he had been grieved at the ruinous disappointment of Clavière†, who was exposed through the acts of the stock-jobbers, to pay 4,000 livres for shares of the Water Company, which he was obliged to give for 1600 in consequence of a time bargain made at that rate. But he sets aside this particular fact, be-

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\* P. 40.

† Another of Mirabeau's friends, whom he does not name, Panchaud, the banker, having speculated like Clavière, was exposed to the same losses.

cause it had not occurred when he boldly undertook the exposure of stock-jobbing, assisted by its wealth, its intrigues, its influences, and by the noble patrons who became its disgraceful accomplices. He glories in his laborious and dangerous mission.

“ Always, wholly, and for ever a stranger to the speculations, even of the most innocent kind, of those gamblers whose trade I abhor, and whose profits I despise, I have wielded during the last six months, with great success, against stock-jobbing (it is a fact which I relate, not a praise I give myself), the noblest and surest of weapons, that of reason. After pointing out its danger, with reference to the shares of the *Caisse d'Escompte* and the Bank of St. Charles, I had still to do the same thing with regard to those of the Water Company, the jobbing upon these last being even more exaggerated than upon the others \*.” Setting out from this point, the author refutes his opponent, whom he harasses with calculations and arguments, and with insults which are not the more excusable because they are very eloquent †. He resumes the discussion upon the constitution of the establishment, its simulated expenses, and the exaggeration of its profits. He maintains, that for the supply of one of the most urgent of public necessities, a simple company cannot offer the requisite security for such a service. He foretells (and

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\* P. 10.

† Pp. 12, 104.

the event has justified his prediction) that some day or other, the supply of water will be taken into the hands of government ; for “ independently of its duties, which are to render all the services for which the tutelar authority is instituted, and in return for which it receives a compensation, the government is, in all respects, the most proper authority to undertake to give water to cities \*.” Mirabeau very judiciously censures the idea of providing for an immense population with the water raised from below Paris, whilst it was much more natural to bring it from above.

“ I remember,” he says, “ that on seeking an explanation of the inconceivable selection of the waters of Chaillot, for supplying the Parisians, it was admitted to me, though I had guessed it without the admission, that the Company had fixed upon that side of the town where they might expect to find rich and liberal subscribers, who would set a great example ! It is to this profound consideration of interest, that we owe the ingenious idea of making the river run back, to give us its waters to drink, after it has been used to wash our feet, whilst we might have it to drink just as pure as the Seine originally brought it to us. If all the learned men in the world have said what they are stated to have said †, though they never uttered it, people of common

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\* P. 16, 17.

† Allusion to the report of the Royal Society of Medicine, dated August 31st 1784, “ on the quality of the water raised and supplied by the steam-engines at Chaillot.”



sense will never be persuaded that the filth of Paris, and of its sewers, is necessary to render the water we drink wholesome: whence it incontestibly follows that the water taken from above Paris should be preferred to that taken from below \*."

Lastly, the author predicts that, at a later period, the government, if it does not abandon the Chaillot hydraulic steam-engines, will, at least, seek other sources, more wholesome and more abundant, for supplying the town with water; that, for instance, it will have recourse to the waters of the Yvette, and the Beuvronne †, a prediction since verified, with regard to the latter, by the opening of the canal de l'Ourcq. He concludes his vehement refutation, by returning to the imputations by which his adversary attempted to throw discredit upon his work.

"M. de Beaumarchais returns continually to his 'speculators upon the fall,' for whom alone he pretends that I wrote my pamphlet on the Water Company.

"He forgets that my works on the *Caisse d'Escompte* and on the Bank of St. Charles, were opposed with the very same arguments. These are the only answers that have been made to them . . . . .

"But where is the book which interested views have not produced? The love of truth, and that of fame, differ from that of money only in their greater rarity,

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\* P. 41.

† Pp. 81, 89.

and in their belonging to a different kind of feeling. They are nobler, no doubt; but their being noble is not now the question; what we now seek to know is, whether we ought to mistrust every work, every examination, and every analysis, proceeding from an interest of some kind.

“When have I deserved that an interest unworthy of esteem should be imputed to any of my works? Few men, I am aware, and I will never cease to repeat it—few men have given greater pretence to calumny than I have done or laid themselves more open to backbiting. But I loudly ask, because my conscience gives me a right to do so, what writer can honour himself with bolder principles, more disinterested views, or a prouder independence? My first object, and, far from concealing, I glory in divulging it—my first object, when I devoted myself to my dangerous duties, as an apostle of truth, was to deserve that my long errors should be forgotten. This is the only interest, the only ambition I ever had; and I trust I shall reap the fruits of its success. For what care the public for the errors of wild youth, provided they are repaired in riper years? But woe to those who should take faults long since confessed, cruelly expiated, and perhaps sufficiently repaired, as a pretence for refusing me the respect which every citizen deserves who is constantly occupied in studies, researches, and works connected with the general good!

“ When a public discussion is useful, what matters the kind of interest which has led to it? It is when the interest is concealed—when it shrinks from and repels all critical examination—when, writing nothing, publishing nothing, using only words of artifice, and secret insinuations, which it varies, according to persons and circumstances, it selects the credulous and ill-informed, to exercise upon them, in darkness, the powers of seduction,—then it is that interest may be suspected of dishonest views \* . . . . By what right, moreover, shall an honest man be forbidden to increase his fortune, by associating himself with the combinations claimed by the public good? Shall he condemn himself to silence for the sole reason that whatever he may say that is true and useful, was first suggested to him by an examination of his own interest? Shall the friend of truth be prohibited from publishing, verifying, or opposing calculations, stating his opinions on matters of public or private economy, because his attention was first called to these subjects by the personal interest of some one of his connexions? If his discussions proceed from such a cause, must they be rejected on that account? Are we doomed ever to remain nothing but ignorant children, girded with the broad band upon which intrigue and quackery have an exclusive right to paint the different shades of their illusions † ? ”

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\* P. 100.

† P. 102.

Mirabeau's frequent defect, and he displays it strongly in this pamphlet, was to spoil a good cause by language much too violent. This prevents us from transcribing the terrible apostrophe in the last page, though it has been quoted during the last fifty years as the most perfect production of a man who has left behind him so many exquisite specimens of eloquence. We extract from it only a single paragraph, in which Mirabeau does himself a justice that posterity will not refuse him, with reference to his zeal, his perseverance, and his courage.

"I know of no other merit," he says, "than an ardent zeal to serve reason and justice. I never found any talent except in powerful persuasion, any nobleness except in good faith, any virtue except in useful courage; and I have no other wish than that of being honoured, until the grave receives me, both by my friends and by my enemies\*."

We add only a word more. It has often been asserted that Mirabeau's writings on financial questions were suggested and even written by Panchaud and Clavière. With regard to suggestions, the fact appears certain, for the materials he employed were evidently supplied by those individuals. As to the assertion that they wrote the works, we need only read the latter at once to detect throughout the rather uniform manner of

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\* Page 104.

Mirabeau, who never attempted to vary his style, which always bore his particular stamp. Perhaps he would have failed in any attempt to give it a new form, had time and inclination prompted him to try\*.

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\* Besides what we have transcribed from the letter to M. de Calonne, of Mirabeau's spontaneous admissions respecting the documents he received from his friends, he gives a similar explanation in his preface to the work on the Bank of St. Charles, in page 89 of his letter to M. Le Couteulx de la Noraye, and in page 7, No. V, of his letters to his constituents.

## BOOK IV.

SOME time before Mirabeau commenced his journey, he had publicly announced his intention \* of proceeding to the North.

All his former biographers have asserted that he went to Prussia on a secret mission, the object of which was to supply the French government with preliminary information that might direct their choice of measures on the death of Frederick the Great, then expected soon to occur—an event that would place upon the throne of Prussia, his nephew, Frederick William II, whose disposition it was necessary to study, particularly as he seemed not likely to pursue his predecessor's political system.

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\* In page 6 of the "Notice" which preceded the second edition of the work on the shares of the Water Company of Paris; also in page 12 of the Notice at the beginning of the "Reply of the Count of Mirabeau to the writer of the Directors of the Water Company of Paris."

This statement of Mirabeau's biographers is merely an anachronism, being erroneous, not as regards the fact itself, but only the time of its occurrence. At the period of the journey to which we now allude, Mirabeau left France for the sole purpose of writing, without personal danger, his insulting letter to M. de Calonne, which we have here made known to the public for the first time, and which, had it been published as he intended, would have drawn upon him the vengeance of the minister whom it attacked, had he not placed himself beyond the reach of M. de Calonne's power. That it was his intention to publish it, we can positively assert; and its having remained unknown up to the present day, is entirely owing to the prudent obstinacy of Mirabeau's friends, to whom he had sent his manuscript without keeping a copy.

Mirabeau's original intention was to go to Germany, in some parts of which he had correspondents. There he no doubt intended to seek employment, as well as to collect materials for a work which he had previously planned to write in retirement, at Mirabeau Castle; a determination he had abandoned when Panchaud, Clavière, and afterwards M. de Calonne, succeeded in making him apply his pen to financial controversy.

We know not the kind of employment Mirabeau wished to obtain in one of the northern courts: perhaps he had not made up his mind on the subject. Neither can we state the precise nature of the work he had

resolved to undertake, although we have reason to believe that it was one of historical and philosophical speculation. Nevertheless he had not fixed upon the form in which he would produce his theories and opinions. The moment he crossed the Rhine and observed the kingdom of Prussia, he no longer wavered as to whither his journey should tend. The recent rise of this powerful kingdom from an obscure and feeble Electorate, the extraordinary fortunes of this state, now the sovereign, or rather the master of part of Poland, whose vassal it had been for many centuries, and had so remained till very lately—the imposing old age of Frederick II, his vicissitudes, his victories, and his powerful genius ;—all these things acted upon Mirabeau's mind and determined his course. Accordingly, at the end of July 1785, he took the road to Berlin.

The reader may have observed, that in Mirabeau's different journeys some accident always befel him. In the one of which we are now giving an account, an attempt was made to assassinate him. Neither the authors, nor the motives, of this diabolical act were ever discovered, either by himself or by his family.

We extract an account of it from Madame de Nehra's manuscript memoirs.

“ He set out with his horde : it was thus he designated his friend, who writes this, Coco (his adopted son), and his favourite dog. The journey commenced on the 23rd of December ; the weather was dreadfully cold,



but no variations of temperature ever stopped us. Between Toul and Verdun, we were in great danger. Were they assassins?—we knew not; but they were certainly not robbers. I make no comment upon the circumstance, I relate it simply as it occurred. It was eleven o'clock at night, and, notwithstanding the snow, the glasses of the carriage were down. The whole coachful were asleep except myself. On a sudden a pistol was fired into the carriage, which was going at a brisk rate upon the causeway. I made a motion to awaken the Count, saying to him : ' My friend, they are firing at us ! ' At the same instant, two other shots were fired almost simultaneously. A ball hit the carriage, made a bump on it, and fell. There is no doubt that my change of position to awaken the Count, and his in rousing himself, prevented us both from being wounded. They were certainly not robbers ; neither were they experienced murderers. This event is one of those concerning which we can only form conjectures. The postilion did the wisest thing, which was, instead of stopping to inquire whether we were wounded or not, to drive full-gallop to the next post-house, from which we were not very far distant. Here we found our servant, who, as he rode on before us, had seen nothing, but had heard the firing, and was coolly talking the matter over as he waited for our arrival. The postilion refused at first to return by the same road, and we had the greatest difficulty to persuade him that he was not the

person whose life was aimed at, and that, as we had been attacked, it was probable that the same parties would not appear again, as it was natural to suppose that we should acquaint the public authorities with what had happened to us. We continued our route, taking the precaution, however, not to fall asleep. Every one showed a great deal of courage, even the poor child, though he was only four years old."

We continue to borrow further particulars from Madame de Nehra's manuscript.

"Mirabeau remained a few days at Nancy, at Frankfurt on the Maine, and at Leipsic. In this latter city he frequented the society of men of learning, and formed some useful acquaintances. He was not now travelling as a fugitive. He reached Berlin on the 19th of January, and, according to custom, was presented to the royal family. The King, who, at this period, no longer received foreigners, replied with his own hand to a letter written to him by Mirabeau, and fixed a day for seeing him at Potsdam. This surprised the whole court, and excited much jealousy among the French then at Berlin \*."

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\* "He deigned to receive and distinguish me. No foreigner, since his reception of me, has been admitted to his conversation. The last time he sent for me, he had just refused the requests of those of my countrymen whom his military manœuvres had attracted to Berlin."—*Preface to the "Letter delivered to Frederic William II, reigning King of Prussia, on the day of his accession to the throne. By the Count of Mirabeau."* 1787, p. 4.

This audience took place January 25th 1786: the following letter from the great Frederic gives us this information.

“Monsieur le Comte de Mirabeau,

“I shall be glad to become acquainted with you, and I am obliged to you for your offer \* of coming hither for that purpose. If you will oblige me so far, the day after to-morrow, 25th instant, and will apply to Major-General the Count of Goertz, I can see you the same day. Meanwhile, I pray to God, Monsieur le Comte de Mirabeau, that he will take you into his holy keeping.

“Potsdam, January 23rd 1786 †.”

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\* From this passage it may be inferred, that Mirabeau does not tell the truth in the preface from which we have just quoted, and in which he expresses himself as follows:—

“Frederic II. called me to him by his own impulse, when I hesitated to trouble his last moments with the very natural desire to behold so great a man, and to escape the regret of having been his contemporary without knowing him.” P. 4.

We have evidence, however, in a letter from Frederic to the Count of Goertz, that the Prussian monarch, on being informed of Mirabeau's arrival, desired to know its cause. Hence it may be inferred, that the traveller was authorised, nay urged, to demand an audience.

“I received, with your letter of yesterday, the packet of books which the Count of Mirabeau begged you to send me. You will oblige me by thanking him warmly in my name. I am, I confess, very anxious to know by what fortunate chance this traveller has come so far; and you would oblige me by letting me know. Whereupon I pray to God, &c.

January 23rd 1786.

“FREDERIC.”

† This letter, which is in our possession, and signed “FREDERIC,”



It seems that Mirabeau felt himself called upon to add, in writing, to the verbal explanations he had given concerning the motives of his journey to Berlin; for the day after the audience, he sent the King a letter, which we the more readily transcribe, because it justifies our previous statements in opposition to those of all Mirabeau's biographers who have preceded us.

“ SIR,

“ I should fear much more to appear guilty of a want of good faith towards your Majesty, than to commit an indiscretion injurious to myself only.

“ When your Majesty did me the honour, yesterday, to ask me if I was going to St. Petersburg, I replied that it was not yet my intention to proceed thither. There were two persons present, and my personal affairs require that my plans should not be noised abroad.

“ Now, that I am speaking to your Majesty alone, I have the honour to state that, having been very ill rewarded for the really great services I have rendered my country in its financial department,—my personal safety and almost my reputation having been endangered by the present Minister, because I would have nothing to do with his last loan, nor assist in his currency operation,—being obliged, during my father's lifetime, to employ my natural activity and feeble talents,—actuated,

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is not an autograph. Perhaps Madame de Nehra's recollections deceived her, or the King may have written another, which however we do not find among the family papers.

likewise, with a desire to make myself regretted in France, I have quitted that country, with the leave of my sovereign, but with the intention of not returning thither so long as I am young and able to do something for myself, unless it be to reap the vast inheritance which my father will leave me.

“ Next to the just curiosity which has brought me to Berlin, where I shall probably wait for my brother, who intends to solicit leave from your Majesty to study your military manœuvres, my intention is, I confess it to yourself alone, to go and seek employment in the country which I know to be most in want of foreigners. I shall, therefore, push on to Russia ; and, assuredly, I should never select that nation in the rough, and that wild country, did it not appear to me that your own government is too completely constituted for me ever to flatter myself that I could be useful to your Majesty. To serve you, and not sit idly in your academies would have been, Sir, my proudest ambition ; but the storms of my early life, and the deceptions of my own country have so long turned my thoughts from this noble design, that I apprehend it is now too late. Deign, Sir, to receive the communication of the project to which I am now forced to confine myself. I was bound to make it, since your Majesty expressed some curiosity to know my destination ; but I venture to entreat that your Majesty will keep my secret.”

The following is the King's reply dated January 28th, two days subsequently :—

“ Monsieur le Comte de Mirabeau,

“ I cannot but feel much obliged to you for your confidential communication to me, in your letter dated the 26th instant, of the reasons which induced you to leave your country, with your Sovereign’s permission, and seek, in a foreign country, to employ your talents with greater success. You may rest assured that I will keep your secret, and that I shall always take an interest in the destiny of a man of your merit, sincerely hoping that it will be one of the most favourable, and conformable to your expectations.

“ It depends entirely upon yourself to remain at Berlin until the arrival of your brother, who intends to ask my permission to study the military manœuvres. This intention gives me the greater pleasure because I hope, during this interval, to see you a couple of times more, and assure you by word of mouth of all my feelings towards you. Meanwhile, I pray to God, &c.

“ FREDERICK.

“ *Potsdam, January 28th 1786.*”

We have but few particulars to relate, connected with the period immediately subsequent to this correspondence. The following passage extracted from a collection of letters scarcely known to the public, explains Mirabeau’s domestic life at Berlin.

“ It is very kind of you to inquire about my happiness and state of mind. The latter is too elastic not

to receive many shocks ; but they are shocks composed of enjoyments, and it is very possible that he who has suffered the most has also had the greatest enjoyment. With regard to my domestic happiness, it is great, and tolerably pure, since my friend appears certain of recovering her health. But my situation here is so painful and difficult, that I am in a hurry to change it. I must, however, find other reasons than pain, which has always found me harder than itself, whenever a conviction of being useful has lightened its burthen \*."

We add, also, another passage from Madame de Nehra's manuscript memoirs.

" During this journey, Mirabeau did nothing remarkable except a few literary compositions, and his letter upon Cagliostro and Lavater, which was not so successful in France as his other works, because in that country the sect of the Illuminati is not very well known†. Working, as he did, like a day labourer‡, he spent part of his time at supper parties of the most tiresome etiquette. Morning and evening, he saw the persons that suited him best, and among others Mr.

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\* Letters to Mauvillon, pp. 31, 32.

† We shall notice this work immediately, and also the other alluded to in the same extract.

‡ The same laborious habits attended Mirabeau everywhere, in prison and in freedom, in his own and in a foreign country. Thus, at the period to which we now refer, he wrote :—

" The public are bound to know only what is printed, but they are bound to know all that is printed." — *Letters to Mauvillon*, p. 45.

Ewart, since English Minister, and M. Dohm \* whose talents he respected and whose person he loved. He also saw with pleasure Sir James Murray, whom he mentions in a passage of the correspondence from Berlin. I am not aware whether it was during this journey that he published his work on the Jews †; but I know that the first idea of it was given to him by M. Dohm, and as Mirabeau did not find this friend at Berlin in 1787, I imagine that I am not wrong in supposing that the work appeared during his first visit to Prussia.

“ Though our letters from Paris did not reach us regularly, we received sufficient to convince us that the only matter which Mirabeau had left unsettled there, that of his pension, the payment of which was still refused by his father, would never be terminated whilst he was absent. Among other things, we were informed of a rather laughable occurrence. It had been proposed to establish a company for the performance of *errands*. The Savoyards at Paris, had assembled in discontent. One of them got upon a tun, (though you will observe that the mania of making speeches was not yet in fashion), and addressed his companions as follows :

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\* Christian Conrad William Dohm, historian, philosopher, economist, afterwards Minister of Prussia to the Count of Cologne, to Liege, the Circles of the Rhine, to the Congress of Rastadt, &c. We shall have again occasion to mention this honourable and distinguished man.

† “ On Moses Mendelssohn, &c.,” 1787.



‘ Friends?—an injustice is about to be done us, but let us not grieve. There is in Paris a man who will support us, and this is the Count of Mirabeau. He always takes the part of the weak against the strong; a little while ago, he saved the water-carriers from starvation, and he will not do less in our behalf: let us go to him.’ They all proceeded accordingly to the Hotel de la Feuillade, and asked for Mirabeau. In vain did the host and hostess assure them that Mirabeau had left Paris the day before: they would not believe this, and it was found necessary to open all the doors to satisfy them.”

After the first months of his residence at Berlin, Mirabeau had reason to apprehend that the child of his adoption would be taken from him. On the other hand, he received no tidings of the progress of his agents in obtaining for him his only means of subsistence. These two reasons made him determine, much against his wish, to return to Paris. He accordingly paid farewell visits to the royal family, and wrote to the King, who immediately replied in the following terms:—

“ Monsieur le Comte de Mirabeau.

“ Unexpected circumstances, as I am informed by your letter of the 14th instant, requiring your speedy return to France, you will oblige me, should you pass this way, by letting me know when you arrive here.

Accept, in the mean time, my thanks for the obliging things you say to me, and be assured &c.

“FREDERICK.

“*Potsdam, April 15th 1786.*”

We have a succinct but animated narrative written by Mirabeau himself, of the visit which took place in consequence of this letter.

“I was an hour, all but a few minutes, with the King, who was in his arm chair, the morning’s drive having fatigued him. It was performed so rapidly that he killed two of his carriage horses. It is impossible to imagine a fresher head, and a more delightful conversation; but I did not enjoy them at my ease. The extreme difficulty with which he breathed, oppressed me more than it did him. A great man, in a state of bodily pain is a very affecting sight! The nature of his complaint is such, and my emotion was so strong that I was afraid of developments, and avoided, even to superstition, any thing that could prolong a conversation which, at any other time, would have proved the greatest happiness to me. You understand this feeling; and I care little whether or not it is understood by many people. Be that as it may, this extraordinary man will reign to the end, and the sun will retard this end. I set out this evening, after having seen many gardens, much gilding, a few fine pictures, a few beautiful antiques, and a few courtiers. But in this long

review, nothing struck me so forcibly as this man so far above the rank in which Providence has placed him, after forming him on purpose to fill it. I am very glad however of this living proof of what may be done in sand: perhaps some thing or other will profit by it, to bring hither other things besides lakes and statues. Tell Dohm that we talked a great deal about the Jews and tolerance. I would not advise fanatics to show their faces here\*."

We add one more extract from a letter written by Mirabeau whilst on his road to Paris.

"I write to you from Paderborn, where the darkest of nights together with a heavy storm forced me to stop for several hours; and though exceedingly fatigued, I cannot refrain from writing a few lines to her whose image always pursues me. You must have had news of me from Brunswick; for I wrote to Dohm a tolerably long letter which I begged he would let you read. I was received at that Court with great kindness, and even welcomed with distinction, because the King of Prussia wrote in my praise whilst I was still there. But I did not find at Brunswick the only man in whom I

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Madame de Nehra dated Potsdam, April 19th 1786. M. Dohm had written a work on "The Necessity of bettering the Civil Condition of the Jews;" and this circumstance, coupled with the esteem and favour shown by Frederick to the author, does this Monarch great honour, because the Jews had been very ill-used during his reign. It was this work, as Madame de Nehra states and we shall hereafter show, which gave Mirabeau the idea of writing his paper, "On Moses Mendelssohn."

took any interest;—I mean the reigning Duke; and of the four days I was forced to pass there, two were spent in *ennui*. I intend to make no more halts: this is imposed upon me by the expense, the tediousness of the journey, and the time, which latter is so terribly consumed by the delays of the postilions and the want of police at the posting houses, that we do not travel more than ten German miles in the twenty-four hours. Besides, I am too unhappy at not hearing from you. As each day, however, brings me news of some fresh event proving a great fermentation at Paris, and as it is only from the first alarm caused by the news of my arrival, that I shall have any thing to fear, I shall spend a couple of days at Tongres with the brothers of the Chevalier Witry: 1st, to concert measures with the Abbé de Perigord \*; 2nd, and especially to select those of my papers which must be put into a place of safety, in order that, should any thing happen, they may be forwarded to you immediately for you to make what use of them your prudence and circumstances may dictate, and our friends advise. These are mere precautions of supererogation, and need give you no uneasiness; but certain papers are so essential, that they must be

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\* Charles Maurice de Talleyrand Perigord, since Prince of Benevento, &c. We shall have occasion hereafter to speak of this remarkable personage, the most illustrious of Mirabeau's friends, and who would also have been the most useful, but for the publication of the correspondence from Berlin,—a publication that caused a suspension of their friendship, which was resumed only on Mirabeau's death-bed.

guarded like the Ark of the Lord. Let this however remain between you and me; for a report, as I have heard, is prevalent at Berlin and throughout Germany, that I should run the greatest risk by returning to Paris, and I should not like the confirmation of this fable to proceed from myself.

“Continue to write to me under the same address, and let several letters at the same time, confirm to me the return of your health. I hope that you have written to Madame Blumendorf, and to some other women, for my worthy enemies will not fail to give out that I have deserted, perhaps murdered my young and charming fellow-traveller, for whom I would give a thousand lives. Dear Yet-Lie, how happy shall I be when I see you again! This short but cruel separation shows me the value, the want I have of your society, and how wrong it is to trouble our internal happiness by wretched illusions and foolish irritability\*.”

Before we come to the short stay made at Paris by Mirabeau, after his return from Prussia, let us dwell an instant upon the works he wrote during his residence in that country.

He had been led thither principally by his intention of writing an important work; and although he did not give up this intention, yet he did not cease to feel the necessity of obtaining less tardy pecuniary resources,

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Madame de Nehra, dated Paderborn, April 25th 1786.

from works of another description. The produce of his literary labours constituted his sole means of subsistence. Far from complaining of this, however, he considered it an honour; for, in his opinion, the very noblest of professions was that of literature, provided they who pursued it properly understood their mission.

“Ah! if they would but honestly devote themselves to the noble calling of usefulness!—If their indomitable self-esteem could but enter into a compromise with itself, and sacrifice vanity to dignity!—If, instead of degrading themselves, tearing each other to pieces, and destroying each other’s influence, they would unite their exertions and labours to overthrow the ambitious man who usurps, the impostor who misleads, and the coward who sells himself!—If, despising the vile trade of gladiators, they would join as true fellow-soldiers against prejudice, lying, quackery, superstition, and tyranny, of whatever kind;—in less than a century, the face of the earth would be changed\*.”

Prior to his journey, Mirabeau had prepared some essays, which were to have appeared in a weekly paper conducted upon the same plan as the “*Mercur* France.” In Germany he wrote several others. All of them remained in his portfolio, and it was our intention to have here given fragments from some of

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\* Preface to the work on Moses Mendelssohn, p. 62.

the best; but so abundant are the materials more directly connected with our work, that we are compelled to omit these interesting extracts.

Mirabeau, in his project of founding a literary journal, had to combat some objections, even by M. de Montmorin, afterwards minister, to whom he wrote—

“I have not the ordinary notions concerning consideration; I give it to those only who deserve it; to virtue, and talent, but not at all to the artificial distinctions of society. Weaned long since from the illusions to which I was called by the chance of birth, accustomed to be myself, and myself only, to estimate myself only by my own opinions, I shall endeavour to qualify myself for every office, and to console myself for not filling any, if your kindness does not some day succeed in overcoming my evil destiny. Truly, the English are as good as we are, if not a little better. Now there is not among them a man of ability, a public man, an acknowledged man of talent, who has not long laboured at those periodical writings, those temporary journals, which our knowledge despises, and which, in every country, have produced great changes in things, great revolutions in ideas, and great effects upon mankind. I cannot feel it derogatory to do that which the most distinguished men in England have done, and still do; and I shall consider that I have not been useless to my country, even in this respect, if the example

of a man whose name, talents, and manner, are not subaltern, should destroy so unreasonable and injurious a prejudice\*.”

Though Mirabeau's object in periodical writing, was to increase his pecuniary means, he wished to remain perfectly master in the choice of his subjects, whether original articles, or criticisms on other works. But this pretension raised difficulties against which “he erected his bristles like an indocile scribe.” This is his own expression.

“Alas, yes!” he wrote, “I am but too well aware that the same circumstances which teach parrots to sing, as well as other birds and birdlings, hungry and talkative like myself, may soon force me to yield, and plunge me into the slough of periodical literature. To write under the dictation of others, about the intellect of others, is not a good system, according to my notions, provided a man have talent of his own. Necessity, however, is a law which none can avoid, and I perceive but too well, that from this time to the period when I shall reap the inheritance which cannot fail me, I must, either voluntarily or by compulsion, work this disagreeable mine†.”

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to M. de Montmorin, dated November 25th 1783.

† Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Vitry, dated February 14th 1785. We add some other passages from the same letter.



Soon after Mirabeau had taken up his abode at Berlin, he published a pamphlet entitled "Letters from the

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"You know the plan of the journal I purpose establishing, but others will not understand it. It is to be founded upon the idea, novel perhaps, and which, in my opinion, is not without its usefulness, of noticing old books, as the ordinary journals notice new ones. To abridge and select, is now, assuredly, the most urgent want of science and letters. To preserve is of a usefulness less direct, perhaps, or rather less abundant. Nevertheless, in proportion as taste and erudition pass away, in proportion as the mania of writing becomes more contagious, in proportion to the ardour in publishing, the haste with which books are published, the mania or necessity of sacrificing to the taste of the day, to the coryphæi of the times, to the pretension of being free from prejudice—which, in point of fact, is scarcely anything better than substituting one prejudice for another; in proportion, I say, as all these diseases gain upon us, and increase, do we too much neglect the exertions of our predecessors, who, although it should be true that we surpass them in the talent of bringing out, ought not the less to attract our attention, in order that we may set in an elegant framework that which they have clumsily enchased. I say then that this article will yield something, and I invoke your researches in the works of our philologists of the sixteenth century, our learned of the seventeenth, our collections and our compilations of all ages but that in which no books were made except with stolen fragments, well or ill-stitched together, no tragedies except with old hemistichs.

"You know that another of my projects is to give in successive parts a work on the academic collections, more especially that entitled 'Memoirs of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-lettres.' My plan here is to take the interesting papers of the collection, and unite them by amalgamating and blending them together, by clearing and pruning, and criticising them one by another,—and to draw from this chaos all that is worthy of the attention of philosophers, men of letters, and men of the world, without crushing them by the

## Count of Mirabeau to M\*\*\*, on Messrs. Cagliostro and

weight of a fastidious erudition. This is an undertaking, the want of which is generally felt, and its utility incontestible.

"I intend to include speculative politics, finance, &c., and the little I shall take from recent literature is my own affair. I say 'speculative politics,' because, although I may be strongly solicited, I will never write what Linguet so ridiculously calls 'annals.' The trade of a hussar no longer suits me. It is not, even in this application, compatible with self-respect; for is there not great rashness in giving intelligence of what passes at a distance, and passing judgment upon it, whilst daily experience shows how difficult it is to obtain information of what is passing close to us?"

On the subject of this plan, so often mentioned by Mirabeau, of digging up and concentrating the scientific and literary riches buried in forgotten or neglected works, we add the following fragment, never before published, of the work by Mirabeau, the greatest part of which was published by Soulavie, under the title of "Memoirs of the Duke d'Aiguillon."

"The art of printing has so greatly facilitated the means of instruction, that science has become a very common commodity. But the mind of man may be improved *ad infinitum*. To render the road to improvement easier, and to make the human intellect advance with rapid strides in its progress of discovery—to engender new ideas, and make our exertions more fruitful, a mode is wanting to abridge study, and avoid repetitions, placing the studious man, especially the man of genius, at the point whence he is to start. If, for instance, he who appeared desirous of seeking new discoveries, were to spend his time in studying the Epicycles of Ptolemy, or the Vortices of Descartes, he should be spoken to in the following words: 'This is the point we have reached: Kepler, Newton, Clairéau, Euler, &c., have guessed, demonstrated, and investigated this branch of science; and it is from the point of their discoveries that you must try to advance.' Is this not the case with all sciences?"

Lavater \*.” His object in this paper is to expose the impudent quackery of the former, and attack the conscientious but dangerous fanaticism of the latter. He here places, in opposition to each other, the hasty judgments passed, in the drawing-rooms at Paris, on Cagliostro, from the circumstance of his being implicated in the affair of the necklace, and those of his partisans, who hastened to justify and acquit him before the courts of justice had tried his case. He recommends the respect due to the forms of justice, whatever may be their imperfections, which imperfections he however makes evident by describing and eulogising an English jury. Refraining from taking either side in a cause still pending, and proceeding from the private litigation to general remarks upon the impudence of the Thaumaturgists and the credulity of their dupes, he unfolds the system of imposture by means of which Cagliostro usurped a great reputation for knowledge, wealth, and beneficence, and obtained recommendations from such grave and circumspect ministers as Messrs. de Vergennes, de Miromesnil, and de Segur. He discusses the public testimony to which Cagliostro and his friends attach the most importance, that is to say, a pretended

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\* Berlin. François Lagarde, March 25th 1786: 75 pages 8vo, with this epigraph:

Quantum carminibus quæ versant atque venenis  
Humanos animos. HORACE.

account given in William Coxe's work on Switzerland, and appearing in Ramond's translation of this work, of Cagliostro's acts of benevolence and the miracles he performed at Strasburgh in 1780. Mirabeau proves that this statement does not exist in the original, and is a mere interpolation by an imaginary translator, or at least by one under a borrowed name, or rather by Cagliostro himself. He quotes some passages written by the learned professor Meiners, for the purpose of unmasking Cagliostro. Mirabeau then expresses his surprise at the connexion between a quack, thus proved to be an arrant cheat, and a minister of the gospel like Lavater, of whom the author draws a portrait, containing much more of antithesis and witticism than of justice and truth. Admitting the good faith of the Zurich doctor, he insists upon his puerile credulity and his exaggerated mysticism. He quotes the serious description written by Lavater of the magnetic process, by which he declares that he cured his wife of a complaint till then incurable. He shows Lavater energetically defending the jesuit Gassner, who boasted that he cast out devils, and the juggler Schroepfer, who conjured up the dead; also Cagliostro himself, whom Lavater believed and justified, without however approving of every thing he did. Mirabeau bears principally upon the blind faith which led Lavater to believe in miracles, which, he alleged, that any true christian could and ought to perform; further, in his "capacity

of the born enemy of quacks and a crusader against their success," Mirabeau comes to the conclusion that it is his duty openly to attack such "philosophico-cabalistic christianity, which leads straight to fanaticism and intolerance." He further observes, that Princes, more especially absolute Monarchs, are sufficiently surrounded with illusions injurious to the people whose fate is in their hands, to justify access to the throne being refused to those intrigues and seductions the effects of which his philanthropic zeal foresees and would counteract\*.

In closing this analysis, we shall speak by anticipation of a work which was not published till the following year, but which Mirabeau wrote at Berlin about the month of July 1786. We notice it in this place, in order to cause no interruption hereafter of what we shall have to state concerning subsequent events and works which cannot be separated, and which we are bound to notice at considerable length.

The production to which we allude is thus entitled: "On Moses Mendelssohn, on the Political Reform of the Jews, and in particular, on the Revolution attempted in their behalf, in 1753, in Great Britain †."

This, in our judgment, is one of the best of Mirabeau's works. It had its origin in the letter on Cagliostro and

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\* Proof of this is in his letter, dated August 16th, to Major Mauvillon, his coadjutor, or rather his partner, in the great work on the "Prussian Monarchy," and to whom Mirabeau applied for the materials of a biography of Mendelssohn.

† London, 196 pages, 8vo.

Lavater, of which we have just given an account, and afforded the author an opportunity of treating fully, by the aid of the book of a friend \*, one of the subjects most suitable to his ardent philanthropy, his love of freedom, his taste and skill in oratorical controversy, and in handling the higher questions of philosophy and politics. In this paper he displays the same qualities that appear in all his writings of a similar description ; but here they are of a superior cast. His reasoning, more methodical here than in his former works, is also much more clear ; the distribution of his arguments and proofs is better proportioned to the respective importance of the different parts of the work ; the style is more serious, more even, and more correct, without losing any of its appropriateness and character. There is a total absence of turgidness, of artificial warmth, of invective, of declamatory exaggeration. In our judgment, this book has no marked fault ; and we are not to attribute it to the forgetfulness of posthumous editors, who have republished works that contained, no doubt, more passion but less talent, more brilliancy but less usefulness, we are at a loss to account for this paper on Moses Mendelssohn not being one of the most popular of the writings that Mirabeau left behind him.

The musician Reichardt, one of Lavater's numerous disciples, thought proper to reply to Mirabeau's letter

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\* " On the Improvement of the Civil Condition of the Jews," by M. de Dohm. 1781.

on his master and Cagliostro; and in support of insufficient arguments, he had recourse to falsehood and personalities. Mirabeau, in a vehement answer to M. Reichardt, protests that he never had any communication with Lavater; and on the other hand, without denying his errors and misfortunes, he shows that neither the one nor the other have any thing to do with the question. He replied with much more moderation to Brissot de Warville \*, who, in his admiration of the Illuminati, without sufficient information, and even without having read, or at least understood, the letter on Cagliostro and Lavater, imputed to him as an offence his having written it. Lastly, Mirabeau replied, also in measured terms, to a third and anonymous opponent, but who was known to be the Landgrave of Hesse Homburg; and dwelling, with more ample particulars and stronger arguments, upon the dangers of the Illuminati, of whom Lavater was one of the most fervent and accredited chiefs, Mirabeau deduced, from the very rank of their present defender, a confirmation of one of the most justifiable grounds for his censure, the object of which was to put sovereigns upon their guard against the dangers of an intolerant and fanatical sect, of which, as the author had himself personally witnessed, the

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\* A celebrated conventionalist, born in 1754, and beheaded in 1793. We shall have occasion to mention him in another part of this work.

Prince Royal of Prussia, afterwards Frederick William II, was one of the blindest dupes.

With reference to some verbal chicanery, Mirabeau, in his work on Mendelssohn, proved his extensive knowledge of the German language\* ; on which occasion he points out, too largely perhaps, but with the greatest lucidity, the advantages resulting from the study of foreign idioms, a study which, in his opinion, is very

\* The autograph manuscript before us is a proof of this knowledge. Chaussard, who, as we shall show elsewhere, speaks in a very erroneous manner concerning the means employed by Mirabeau to obtain the materials for his "Prussian Monarchy," has also dreamt that Mirabeau did not understand German. This is his statement on the subject:—

"Among other documents, Mirabeau had procured a secret statistical table of Germany."—[Where there are no secret statistics.—ED.] "The difficulty was to translate it ; but his favourite maxim was 'that a man can do any thing he chooses.' He gave a proof this ; and with a secretary who could not speak a word of German," [this secretary was the Baron de Noldé, a German by birth.—ED.] "a German *valet de chambre* who did not understand French, and the help of a dictionary, he translated this statistical table, and sent copies of it to Louis XVI."—Page 50 of the "*Summary of the Life,*" placed at the beginning of the work entitled "*Esprit de Mirabeau.*" We repeat, that a perusal of the work on Mendelssohn, and that on the "Prussian Monarchy," are alone sufficient to show that Mirabeau had deeply studied the German language.

The fable invented by Chaussard is repeated by Cadet-Gassicourt, page 24 of the second edition of his "*Essay on the Private Life,*" &c. ; and this is the more singular, because Cadet-Gassicourt complains of his having been copied by the very writer he himself copies. The same story has found its way into the "*Biographie Universelle,*" page 95 (2nd col.) vol. xxix.



improperly neglected by the French, who depend too much upon the universality of their language. Then, taking up the principal subject of the work, the author, after a magnificent eulogium on Lessing, comes to Moses Mendelssohn, his principal pupil, who had died three months previously \*. He now gives the singular history, and draws the most interesting picture of this man, sprung from a race still despised, and formerly degraded and proscribed, who, though deformed, infirm, sickly, and devoted, from the extreme poverty of his obscure family and the contempt into which his race had fallen, to ignorance and misery, had nevertheless elevated himself by means of practical morality to the most sublime philosophy ; who, by the richness of his imagination, had acquired an eminent rank in literature ; who, by his knowledge, had helped the progress of science in an already advanced stage of civilisation ; and who, by his deeds of charity, had become the apostle of benevolence. By the credit of his name he obtained patronage for those of his own sect, over whose instruction and moral improvement he exercised the highest influence. Mirabeau praises and reviews the principal works of Moses Mendelssohn ;—among others, his *Phædon*, imitated from Plato, whose soul and imagination live again in his imitator ; his demonstration of the immortality of the soul, “so consolatory to virtue, though she can do without it,”—a demon-

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\* January 4th 1786, at the age of 57 years.

stration supported by the authority of Leibnitz, Wolf, Kant, by all the resources of the strictest logic, and by all the inspirations of the purest morality; and his "Jerusalem," an admirable theory of religious tolerance. Mirabeau remarks on this subject the interesting concordance between the principles and expressions of the poor and obscure Jew, and two great authorities which he could not have known\*. He gives an account of the persecutions endured by the author of

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\* The learned reader will be perhaps surprised to find in this brief and rapid summary, the preamble of the act constituting the republic of Virginia, which, in the beginning of the present year, had established throughout its territory absolute freedom of religion, and the *exposé* of principles, by M. Turgot, on religious toleration, such as it exists in his life lately published. In fact, I have, strictly speaking, done nothing but transcribe these two pieces; but I have done so because it would have been impossible for me to explain more faithfully Mendelssohn's theory, and to give with greater accuracy the substance of his book. This agreement between a statesman who had deeply meditated upon human affairs, a legislature so distinguished as that of Virginia, which had performed such noble deeds, and a private individual—a poor Jewish philosopher,—who certainly had never communicated either with the French philosopher or with the members of the American legislature, but by the sole power of a sane and methodical system of reasoning had come not only to the same conclusions, but had used the very same arguments;—such an agreement, I say, ought to be considered a very conclusive stamp of truth. Be that, however, as it may, Mendelssohn's 'Jerusalem,' the second part of which contains some curious developments concerning the Jewish religion, or rather concerning the manner in which the writer conceived it, deserves to be translated into every language in Europe."—Pp. 27, 28.

a work full of such lovingkindness, from even the spiritual chiefs of his own sect ; and this is perhaps the principal motive that induced Mirabeau to write the first part of his work. He next relates a thoughtless step taken by Lavater under the excitement of his enthusiasm. Having translated the "*Palingénésie*," into which Bonnet had introduced an evangelical demonstration of the Christian religion, Lavater thought proper to dedicate his translation to Moses Mendelssohn, and entreat, or rather publicly call upon him either to refute this demonstration, or to abjure the Hebrew creed. Mirabeau points out the rashness, not to say cowardice, of this public appeal by a minister of the ruling religion, to the venerable representative of a nation proscribed during so long a period by a thousand ever-reviving prejudices, and still scarcely tolerated. He gives an account of the reply, full of moderation, unction, and skill, published, with even Bonnet's approbation, by Mendelssohn, who, though remaining within the pale of his own religion, knew how to respect that of others, and even tried to promote peace between the different sectaries of the faith he would not embrace. Mendelssohn contented himself with demanding equal protection for every form of religion which was sincere in its doctrines, and was peaceful and moral. He concluded by declaring that, although he did not decline a discussion, still he thought himself bound by prudence to elude it, though quite ready to

maintain it if compelled ; a declaration, let it be said, of which no notice was taken by Lavater, or any of his fiery disciples.

After these first testimonies of deep interest, Mirabeau enters at once into his principal subject, the necessity of a political reform in the condition of the Jews. He states the persecutions which, at every period of their history, they have endured in their form of worship, in their persons, and in their properties. He exposes the unjust and severe reprobation which they have suffered even since the term of their proscription, together with the state, sometimes of humiliation, sometimes of mistrust, but always of constraint and restriction, to which they are reduced almost everywhere. He asks whether the iniquities cast upon them are explained by their religion? Certainly not : for much of the old intolerance has been dispersed by the light of knowledge, and their religion contains no anti-social principles. Is it explained by their obstinacy in confining themselves to their own ceremonies and usages? Certainly not : for there are other sects no less exclusive. Besides, have they not some reason to be proud of these ceremonies, rites, and usages, which twenty centuries of persecutions have been unable to eradicate? Is it explained by their intolerance? Certainly not : for what other communion is not equally intolerant with regard to other communions?—and why should the law, which has no concern with religious belief, fear the

intolerance of one sect, and have no apprehension concerning that of every other sect? Is it explained by the state of their morals? Certainly not: for the Jews are a moral and religious people, chaste in married life, good parents, and good children. Is it explained by their vices? Certainly not: for they have not more vices or less virtues than the nations who spurn and ill-use them. Is it explained by their covetousness, or want of faith? This is taking the effect for the cause. Are not their covetousness and want of faith the necessary consequences of the tyranny which refuses them all respectable means of obtaining their livelihood, and prohibits their following any liberal and respectable profession? How can we demand from them obedience to laws whose safeguard is denied them, or to the authority by which, far from being protected, they are oppressed?

In support of these considerations, Mirabeau enumerates the misfortunes with which the condition of the Jews is still charged. He shows that they are wholly excluded from some northern countries, scarcely tolerated in others, and borne upon by vexatious restrictions and mistrust; and all this everywhere except in Holland and in England, where they are worthy and useful members of society, because they are kindly treated,—where they are laborious, prudent, regular, honest, because they are free and unmolested, and because they are allowed to be happy.

“Supposing, however,” he observes, “that they did not immediately appear entirely worthy of the complete adoption which justice and humanity claim for them ; is it not clear that their descendants will soon be worthy of it, and will largely repay the benefit ?

“The colonists attracted to and welcomed in the several European states, since religious persecution has gone out of fashion, are, for the most part, men of no capacity or industry,—imbecile children, who fancy that a foreign sky is more serene than their own, and trust that they shall spend in idleness many happy days under it. Not a few of them are wretches who have fled from the sword of justice, or worthless vagabonds who cost the state much more than they produce. But many among them leave children who, forgetting the vices or the prejudices of their progenitors, produce a generation of good citizens, sufficient to indemnify with usury the country adopted by their forefathers. Thus there is no government that does not encourage the arrival of colonists. And yet all countries spurn the Jews ! How inconsistent ! . . . Can any sensible man suppose that the emigrants, Puritans and Quakers, who peopled North America, are to be compared to those who have founded the most flourishing empires that have adorned this globe ? Certainly not. It was with corrupt morals and knowledge as limited as their wealth, that the greater number of these poor wretches went to the New World in search of a condition of

which they had, perhaps, rendered themselves unworthy in the Old \*”

Mirabeau next quotes the English act of Parliament of 1753, conferring upon the Jews the power of being naturalised, without previous abjuration. He states, and develops the arguments published for and against this measure; the latter stamped with intolerant and fanatical prejudices, and with national selfishness as thoughtless as it was unjust; the former strong in reasoning, supported by justice and humanity. This act of Parliament was no sooner passed than it was repealed, thanks to the pusillanimity of the administration, which the author accuses with as much energy as justice. He then proceeds to refute Michaelis, a learned but prejudiced writer, who revives against the Jews all the old arguments dictated by intolerance and fanaticism. Mirabeau here quotes and strengthens the arguments adduced in refutation of this writer by Mendelssohn, and concludes with the following passage.

“ I exhort the adversaries of the Jews, (would the word *enemy* were banished from every language !) to examine with good faith, whether, in this important discussion, they have not always justified oppression by its own consequences, looked for the cause in the effect, calumniated instead of explaining, supposed instead of proving, and replied with predictions. I exhort them to ask themselves whether it be not an act of

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\* Pages 82, 83, 84.

very reprehensible levity to support, by frivolous and hasty objections, by facts very doubtful, if not positively untrue, and by base and gratuitous suppositions, so barbarous a prejudice as that which separates from the rest a numerous portion of the human species, and degrades them below the rank assigned by nature to her children. In moral problems, it is nature that should be consulted; it is upon general arguments, upon primitive and original data common to the whole race of man, that we must decide.— Human nature is everywhere the same. The Jews will be the same as other citizens in those states where they have the same rights, and where the same obligations are imposed upon them. Admitting it were true, that some evils might arise from a political reform in the condition of the Jews; admitting that their moral and physical regeneration required a little vigilance in the police, and a little paternal care,—is the government instituted for any other object than such vigilance and such care? Has it any duties more sacred, any more important interests? No assuredly: it would itself censure any one who should allege that state reasons required its being at once cruel and timid, and that it should banish and oppress foreigners. Let us go further: that government would accuse itself of ignorance, impiety, or inactivity, which should avow its want of power to restore good morals and propriety of conduct to a people who had lost them in the suffer-



ings inflicted by oppression, and who would infallibly recover them by more equitable treatment; for, even independently of the regeneration of the Jews, it requires only an efficient police and a few simple institutions, to facilitate the passing from one to the other of these conditions\*.

“Do you mean to say that the pretended vices of the Hebrews are so deeply rooted, that they cannot be eradicated, except in the third or fourth generation? Very well!—begin immediately then: for this is no reason why you should defer the great political reform of one generation, since, without that reform, a corrected generation will never exist; and the only thing you cannot regain is lost time†.”

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\* Pp. 129, 130.

† P. 140. It may be asked how it happened that Mirabeau, who so warmly pleaded the cause of the Jews, less humiliated and persecuted in his own than in other countries, did not come forward as the champion of the Protestants, who did not recover their civil rights in France till two years subsequently. Mirabeau, however, had not neglected a cause so worthy of himself. The following passage was written by him even when he was confined in the donjon of Vincennes:—

“The Protestants have no civil condition in France. Every just man must shudder at this fact. Setting aside all discussion on tolerance, and without purposing to favour, the least in the world, the exercise of the reformed religion, or to admit to public offices those who profess it, I ask, at least, why they cannot obtain that which is granted to the Jews from one end of the kingdom to the other—that which Protestant Princes never refused to the Catholics, nor even the Pagan Emperors to the Christians whom they persecuted,—I mean legal means of securing the condition of their

We consider ourselves bound to give some development to our review of this writing of Mirabeau's, which is at the same time the performance of a good action, and a work of high talent. He partly reaped the fruits of it, by the good it produced. At least, he thought it produced good; and this persuasion, which was a just reward, is attested by the following letter, which he wrote to Madame du Saillant, inclosing a copy of the work.

"I have now, my very dear sister, redeemed my pledged

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children? After the revocation of the edict of Nantes, it was barbarously or madly thought, that by avoiding any explanation on this subject, so painful an uncertainty, added to other vexations, would bring about the conversion of the Protestants. Nevertheless, they were allowed to marry. The government pretended to believe that there were no more Protestants in the kingdom, and this silly fiction was considered a masterpiece of state policy. The declaration of the 7th of April 1736, on the burial of those to whom ecclesiastical funeral rites were not granted, led to a hope that the government would take some steps concerning births and marriages. Public expectation was, however, deceived. Since 1740, more than four hundred thousand marriages *in the desert* are calculated to have taken place, which is a fruitful source of scandalous lawsuits and dreadful iniquities. In whatever way the courts of justice, jammed in between the natural law and the letter of the positive law, decide in such cases, their decisions are attacked, and the result of their judgments is as uncertain as the contents of the judgments themselves. The security, the civil condition, and the fortunes of two millions of citizens depend upon the very changeable systems adopted by the government, and fresh emigrations will consummate the evil which former irreparable losses have occasioned to the country. Let people again assert that the laws of Louis XIV against the Protestants have fallen into disuse, and that it is therefore unnecessary to repeal them!"—*Lettres de Cachet*, vol. ii. p. 154.

word ; think now of redeeming yours. I hunger after some chat with you.

“ You must recollect that the preface to the Mendelssohn is solely adapted to the meridian of Germany, and that I recommend to your attention the work only which is obtaining at this moment an affecting victory. The King of Prussia is occupied in giving civil liberty to the Jews, and my demands do not surpass his concessions \*.”

Before we began a digression, which we thought necessary, in order to make known to the reader the nature of Mirabeau's labours during his first residence at Berlin, we stated that his affections as well as his domestic affairs induced him to return to Paris, where he arrived May 22nd 1786.

The public attention was then wholly occupied by the prosecution of the Cardinal de Rohan, on the occasion of the famous necklace. Mirabeau's letters, now before us, allude continually to this prosecution, and in a sense unfavourable to the Court.

He justly reproaches the Court with imprudent and blind precipitation, in undertaking a rash prosecution, at the risk of weakening the prestige, hitherto considered sacred, of the royal majesty, and of increasing the dangers by which the throne was already approached, and would soon be surrounded. We transcribe from

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Madame du Saillant, dated June 8th 1787.

these letters only a single passage, which, by showing the popular effervescence which Mirabeau witnessed, explains the prophetic inferences drawn by his strong and penetrating mind.

“ At ten o'clock \*, a simple decree of discharge was rendered. So early as five in the morning, the populace inundated the neighbouring streets, and all the halls of the Palais de Justice. I know not by what issue the Parliament would have made their escape if they had decided wrong. The mob stopped, caressed, and kissed them : five hundred individuals prostrated themselves before them—it was a delirium. And indeed, might not the danger so madly incurred by the passions of masters, who ought to have no passions, or who, at least, ought to conceal or to conquer them—might not this danger, made a pretence of by ministers, become one to the commonwealth?—and has not public opinion, which displayed passion in its turn, obtained a signal triumph? Thirty years ago, the Cardinal would have been lost beyond redemption; for in those days the public authority would have covered absurdity with tyranny. Fortunately, it can do so no longer. The test is severe, but decisive. May other passions not make an undue use of it †.”

The friends of Mirabeau, who eluded his strong

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\* The decree was dated May 31st 1786.

† Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Madame de Nehra, dated June 1st 1786.

desire to publish his letter to M. de Calonne, had their private reasons for so doing. These friends were Panchaud, the Duke of Lauzun, and the Abbé de Perigord. Being also on friendly terms with the minister, they had long entertained a hope of inducing the government to confer upon Mirabeau a public employment, assorted to his birth and talents. His journey to Prussia, his reception there, and the honourable pursuits he had there followed, gave them what they deemed a favourable opportunity of urging their wishes. They pointed out the advantages which diplomacy would derive from the residence of such a man at Berlin, at a time when the expected death of a King, who had reigned forty-six years, and the accession of a successor who was supposed favourable to a totally different system of politics, might lead to some very important changes in the connexion between the great European powers. These representations were listened to ; and whether from the confidence placed in Mirabeau by M. de Vergennes and M. de Calonne, or from fear only on the part of the latter, it was determined that Mirabeau should be employed by the government. In compliance with a demand made by the ministers, he sent them a paper " On the actual State of Europe," dated June 2nd 1786. He was immediately furnished with instructions ; on the 3rd of July he set out for Prussia ; and on the 10th he was at Brunswick, on his way to Berlin.

For the better understanding of what follows, we here give a rapid analysis of this paper, which is placed at the head of the correspondence from Berlin, so unfortunately published two years subsequently, under circumstances which we shall explain in their proper place.

Frederick II is near the term of his glorious life. His successor, who has personal causes of complaint against the Emperor, Joseph II, has every thing to fear from the unquiet and turbulent, fantastic and fickle, but innovating and ambitious disposition of this sovereign, whom absolute power, and the secret assistance of Russia, supply with the means of doing harm. His views, like those of Catherine II, tend to realise the "Oriental system." The Emperor adheres to this system, because he finds in it facilities for invading Italy, and overturning Germany; and the accomplishment of his plans, whether partial or complete, would destroy the equilibrium of Europe.

Frederick William, the successor of the dying King of Prussia, is threatened in his possession of Silesia, and even in the political existence of his kingdom, by the Emperor's projects, the connivance of Russia, and the dying agony of Poland. But, for his defence, and, perhaps, for offensive warfare, he has the best filled exchequer, the best army, and the most skilful general in Europe.

Thus, the best interests of Frederick William direct his views towards France. But he is displeased with

then rapid progress of the King's disorder. Of the death of Frederick II, which took place August 17th 1786, he speaks in the following terms :—

“ The event is consummated, Frederick William reigns, and one of the greatest minds that ever filled a throne has been broken, at the same time with one of the finest moulds that nature ever formed \*. His complaint, which would have killed ten men, lasted eleven months, almost without intermission, from the first attack of suffocating apoplexy, from which he was relieved by emetic tartar; and as he came to himself he uttered, with an imperious gesture, the words ‘hold your tongue!’ Nature tried four different times to save this rare composition; so that it may be said she did not abandon one of her most beautiful works until after the total destruction of organs worn out by age, continued tension of mind and soul during forty-six years, the fatigue and agitations of all kinds which distinguished his magic reign, and a most prostrating disease. This great man died August 17th, at twenty minutes past two in the morning; and on the 15th, when, contrary to his constant habit, he dozed until eleven o'clock, he performed his usual routine of labour, though excessively weak, but without failing in his attention, and with a presence

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\* “ Secret History of the Court of Berlin, or Correspondence of a French Traveller,” &c., vol. i. p. 91. Mirabeau, who often copied himself, has used the same passage in one of his letters to Mauvillon, p. 12.

but she must be better warned and better served. It is expedient to attempt an accommodation with England, and an offensive and defensive alliance with Prussia : in a word, her external and internal affairs must be properly settled.

The government were much struck with this concise and substantial statement, written with a freedom and boldness which may be naturally thought strange, but which the author characterised by saying that he sent the paper "as a free man, not as a courtier." Mirabeau was immediately sent off to Prussia, and on the day after his arrival, July 12th 1786, he began a correspondence, which he continued to carry on without interruption until January 9th 1787. This correspondence consists of sixty-six letters, principally addressed to the Abbé de Perigord and the Duke of Lauzun, who acted as intermediate agents between him and M. de Calonne.

However ill-assorted the medley contained in these letters, they appear to us to treat fully enough of all that could interest the parties to whom they were written. They further prove, that Mirabeau had a very remarkable talent for diplomacy. This talent, in fact, constantly displayed itself in his conversations with those friends to whom he unbosomed himself, and who have stated this to ourselves, for we have known several of them : M. de Pellenc, the principal of them, was alive but a few months since.

In his very first letter, Mirabeau begins to relate the



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\* “ Secret History of the Court of Berlin, or Correspondence of a French Traveller,” &c., vol. i. p. 91. Mirabeau, who often copied himself, has used the same passage in one of his letters to Mauvillon, p. 12.

of mind and a conciseness exceedingly rare in any other Prince in full health . . . . Two-thirds of the Berlin people are now torturing their brains to prove that Frederick II was a very ordinary man, almost inferior to others . . . . . Oh ! if his large eyes, which conveyed, at the will of his heroic soul, either seduction or terror, did but open for a moment, would these stupid flatterers have the courage to die of shame \* ? ”

Mirabeau gives an account of the accession of Frederick William ; and in his narratives, his observations, and his conjectures, he successively draws a portrait of that monarch who of his uncle's royal qualities possessed only physical bravery. From a repugnance, originating in personal resentment, and still more from the instinct of mediocrity, the new King was eager to swerve from the administrative and political views of his predecessor, without skill either to invent or to accept another system. With the want of being directed and governed, he had a particular dread of being directed and governed, or rather of appearing to be so ; and to this silly fear he sacrificed the natural means and aids which circumstances had placed in his hands to enable him to continue the beautiful reign of the great Frederick, and to improve the constitution and consolidate the power of a monarchy established, not by time, but by force and stratagem, war and diplomacy, and which therefore

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\* “ Secret History of the Court of Berlin,” vol. i. pp. 215, 216, 217.

had more of splendour than of real consistence, more of acquired glory than of assured stability.

The means which Frederick William II possessed were these. He had a well furnished exchequer, but which he soon emptied: for, being unable to save, or to spend judiciously, he derived no real advantages from the fruits of his uncle's economy, and even while impoverishing himself, gave occasion to his being accused of avarice. He had, besides, an army which he wished to improve, but which he enervated, and the esteem of which he did not gain, whilst he lost its affection. He had allies also, who found him neither consistent, nor sure, nor with any settled plan of politics; for, with the exception of the interests, not of Holland, but of the Stadtholdership, to which he was bound by his strong attachment to his sister, who had married the Stadtholder, he remained irresolute between his friends and natural enemies,—that is to say, between England and France, Russia and Austria.

The aids which circumstances offered to the new King were the ministers and generals formed by his predecessor, and the events that had formed the latter himself, as well as his destiny and his kingdom, both extraordinary and unexampled. Among others, the King had two near kinsmen, powerful by their services, their talents, their renown, and their military popularity, and who, under a strong-minded monarch, would necessarily have been the instruments, and under a weak

monarch the depositaries, of the sovereign power. These were Prince Henry \* and the Duke of Brunswick †. The former, under the late King, had been only his first subject, his most brilliant soldier, honoured abroad, but kept in check at home. Prince Henry thought he had a right, and was impatient to undertake the guardianship of the new Monarch. The Duke of Brunswick, who had also been employed, kept in check, but caressed and governed by Frederick II, and whose ambition was more skilful and more circumspect than that of his rival, was not less eager to assume the same office, though he concealed it with more art.

From the very commencement of his correspondence, Mirabeau constantly mentions these two distinguished individuals. He draws a picture of Prince Henry more and more unfavourable, describing his hauteur and submission as equally out of place, his precipitancy and his awkwardness, his prompt discouragement, and his thoughtless return to confidence. He also describes the Duke of Brunswick, who, evincing as much discretion, secrecy, and perseverance as his competitor displayed haste, bustle, and fickleness, pursued a very

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\* Frederick Henry Louis of Prussia, second brother of Frederick II, born January 18th 1726, and died August 3rd 1802.

† Charles William Ferdinand Duke of Brunswick Luneburg, born October 9th 1739, and died October 10th 1806, from the effects of a wound received at the battle of Auwerstadt.

different road to reach the same object, which however he did not attain.

We shall attempt, in another place, to convey in a few words an idea of the serious and useful part of this correspondence, leaving out all personal details concerning the ministers who were contending with each other for the direction of a weak King, all particulars relating to secondary intrigues, and more especially a great number of frivolous remarks and scandalous anecdotes, which give to political despatches the tone and degradation of the reports of an ignoble *espionnage*.

Mirabeau in closing his correspondence proclaims by anticipation, in favour of Holland, to which recollections of hospitality exercised towards himself had attached him, the great principles of political reform he was about to develope in his own country, whither he was now anxious to return. Often in his letters, too often perhaps, he demands an acknowledged mission, an office in which he might render himself as useful as he feels himself capable of becoming. At the close of 1786, he determined to quit Berlin.

“What could I do here henceforward? Nothing useful; and a great public utility very direct, and very immediate, could alone make me overlook the extreme impropriety of the amphibious station conferred upon me here, if it lasted any longer. Once more, what I

can do, what I deserve, what I am worth, must now be determined upon between the King and his ministers. If I deserve and can do nothing, I cost too much; if I deserve and can do something; if nine months—for they will have elapsed before my return—if nine months in a very painful subaltern situation, in which I have encountered thousands of obstacles and no assistance whatever, have enabled me to show any knowledge of men, any information, any sagacity, without including the valuable matters I shall bring home in my portfolio,—I owe it to myself to demand and obtain an avowed appointment, or to return to my calling of citizen of the world, which will be less fatiguing for my mind and body and less unfruitful for my fame. I declare then positively, or rather I repeat, that I can no longer remain here, and I demand a formal authorisation for my return, whether the government have any further views upon me, or whether they will restore me to myself. Assuredly I shall never feel reluctance to undertake any useful occupation\*.”

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\* Vol. ii. p. 348. If we are to believe Mirabeau, he received and even in a very pressing manner, the order to return which he had demanded.

“I have just received, my dear Major, an order to set out for Paris, and travel day and night. It is therefore impossible I can pass through B. (Brunswick) and embrace you. But this is only deferred; for besides its being a vent for my heart, I leave arms and baggage, friend, child and servants at Berlin.”—*Letters to Mauvillon*, p. 178, dated January 20th 1787, the very day on which Mirabeau set out.

Mirabeau, as we must observe, was urged by another motive, in which, far from concealing it, he took a pride.

“My heart has not grown old, and if my enthusiasm is damped it is not extinguished. I have fully experienced this to-day. I consider one of the best days of my life that on which I have received from you an account of the convocation of the Notables, which no doubt will not long precede that of the National Assembly. In this, I see a new order of things which may regenerate the monarchy. I should deem myself a thousand times honoured in being even the junior secretary of this assembly, of which I had the happiness of giving the first idea\*.”

Such is the conclusion of this correspondence, which has led Mirabeau's enemies to accuse him of inconsistency, and to stain with the imputation of venality

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\* Vol. ii. p. 350. There is every reason to believe that Mirabeau had given advice on this subject; at least he says that he did, not only in the almost official letter we have just quoted, but in two other letters written to a friend who possessed his whole confidence.

“The advice which you call sublime, comes from me. I gave the first idea, the plan,” &c.—*Letters to Mauvillon*, p. 183.

“With reference to the assembly of Notables whatever rights I may appear to have, from the execution of an idea purely mine, and of which I traced the whole plan, I cannot think that our government has reached that degree of liberality which may make it desire that I should be one in an Assembly of Notables,—still less that I should occupy the place assigned to me by the public voice, that of Secretary.”—*Letters to Mauvillon*, p. 179.

the very principle of his mission, by attaching dishonour to its clandestinity, contesting the usefulness of Mirabeau's labours, and exaggerating the pecuniary emoluments he derived from it — "emoluments," they still exclaim, "the more lucrative in proportion as they were more degrading."

Our sole reply to this charge is the transcription of a correlative passage in a letter which he wrote to his father a year subsequently, and from which letter we have already given extracts \*.

"I had set out for Berlin, in order not to remain in the breach. An account of the Bank of St. Charles appeared, which proved very injurious to me; the iniquitous and insane decree of October 2nd 1785, followed. Calonne knew that I was going to reply, and publish, and that I should crush the stock-jobbers and their chief. He thought it better to employ me. Frederick II was dying; some of my letters to my friends had led to the belief that I knew the country tolerably well. Our diplomacy there was not very active. According to his own account, and that of my friends, who had alarmed him, Calonne engaged M. de Vergennes to allow me to be entrusted with a secret mission, at the expense of the finance department. I was accordingly sent for to Paris, and was asked for some preliminary notions on Prussia. These I gave as

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to his father, dated October 4th 1788.



free man, not as a courtier. Instructions and ciphers were given to me, and I once more set out for Berlin, having no further check with regard to money matters than to count *as from clerk to master*. When asked what salary I would have, I replied in these words :— ‘ I shall spend only for you ; therefore you shall pay what I lay out. With regard to future arrangements, as you brought me into office, it is for me to conduct myself well enough for you not to be tempted to turn me out again.’ To tell you the truth, I did not think them such fools, nor so alarmed at any description of talents and reputation, as they are in reality. Be this as it may, what I have just stated is the only ground people have ever had for saying that M. de Calonne paid me. The King, in fact, paid me, and in the following manner : I spent for him forty-two thousand livres in eight months and a half, including several secret services, the expense of different journeys, two secretaries, the luxury of clothing necessary at the Northern Courts, horses of all kinds, which are indispensable at Berlin, excursions into the interior of Germany, and the purchase of materials for the work on the Prussian Monarchy, which were the primitive elements of a paper for the ministers. Of these forty-two thousand livres, the King still owes me twelve thousand, which I shall probably never receive. If you add, that I have never foretold an event that did not occur, and that not a single event happened in Prussia that I did not fore-

tel ; if you further add fifty-four despatches in cipher, the shortest of which filled sixteen pages, and some fifty pages, I doubt that you will think I have cost more than I was worth."

We shall now only add a few particulars concerning Mirabeau's domestic life at Berlin ; and in favour of their novelty, we trust the reader will excuse their simplicity, and the ingenuousness with which they are written.

" He was prodigiously occupied at Berlin ; and it is inconceivable the use he made of his time. He often did not go to bed till an hour after midnight. He rose at five in the morning, in the middle of winter, and in this cold climate ; and, without any thing on but a simple quilted dressing-gown, without stockings or waistcoat, he worked away without even calling up his servant to light him some fire. Besides his correspondence in cipher, which occupied him a great deal, he worked assiduously at his " Prussian Monarchy," which was published in 1788. In the evening, when he did not go out into company, he would amuse himself like a great boy, with Noldé and his secretary ; it was who should play the other the most tricks. Mirabeau was spared the most, not from respect to the master of the house, but because he being the strongest, the others were afraid of his blows. He had a valet de chambre named Boyer, a good creature, though somewhat of a scamp. This man invented a species of *ombres Chi-*

*noises*, and got up some plays. The child and I did not always do them the honour to be present at these representations. When we did, I gave notice in the morning ; the scenes, which were either in German or in French \*, were then arranged accordingly, and all that was too free was struck out. Boyer was much vexed at this, and complained that all the wit of the piece was taken away ; but when Mirabeau had said, ‘Take care of your ears, if Madame is not satisfied ;’ it was necessary to obey †.”

Having thus given an idea of Mirabeau’s political correspondence, before we follow him to Paris, we must notice another work which he wrote at Berlin ; not the “ Prussian Monarchy,” which has its place elsewhere, but his letter to William Frederick II ‡, the spontaneous work of a mind constantly occupied with noble ideas, useful reforms, and philanthropic projects.

The title of this letter indicates that it was delivered on the very day of the new King’s accession to the throne, eight months before its publication. It was not the usual fiction in similar cases ; a proof of which is

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\* Mirabeau wished that “ the child,” then four years old, should speak both languages. “ I have a good German nurse for the child, who knows as much German as French, an advantage I am anxious he should not lose.”—*Letters to Mauvillon*, p. 231.

† Unpublished Memoirs of Madame de Nehra.

‡ Letter addressed to Frederick William II, reigning King of Prussia, on the very day of his accession to the throne. By the Count of Mirabeau.”—Berlin, 1787. 84 pages, 8vo.

to be found in the following reply from Frederick William II :—

“ Monsieur le Comte de Mirabeau,

“ Your letter of the 17th instant \*, with the paper enclosed in it, has been delivered to me. I am much obliged to you for sending me the latter, and for the kind things you have been good enough to say to me on this occasion. Be assured, that every thing coming from you will give me pleasure. Whereupon I pray to God, &c. †.”

Never was counsel more zealous and more neglected, wiser and more useless than that contained in this eloquent letter.

“ You have reached the throne at a fortunate period. The age is becoming daily more enlightened. It has laboured for your benefit, in collecting sound notions for you. It extends its influence over your nation which so many circumstances have kept behind others. Every thing is now tested by a severe logic. The men who see only a fellow-creature under the royal mantle, and require that he should possess some virtue, are more numerous than ever. Their suffrages cannot be dispensed with. In their opinion, one kind of glory alone remains—every other is exhausted. Mili-

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\* The very day of Frederick's death.

† Unpublished letter from Frederick William II to Mirabeau, dated August 20th 1786.

tary success, political talents, wonders in art, improvements in science, have all appeared in turn, and their light has blazed forth from one extremity of Europe to the other. That enlightened benevolence, which gives form and life to empires, has not yet appeared, pure and unmixed, upon a throne. To you it belongs to place it there; this sublime glory is reserved for you. Your predecessor gained battles enough, perhaps too many; he has too much fatigued Fame's hundred tongues, and exhausted military glory, for several reigns, nay, for several centuries. \* \* \* \* \*

With much greater facility, you may create a glory more pure and not less brilliant, which shall be wholly your own. Frederick conquered the admiration of mankind, but he never won their love. \* \* \* \* \* This love you may entirely possess\*.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Do not, ah! do not neglect the treasure which Providence has spread in your path. Deserve the blessings of the poor, the love of your people, the respect of Europe, and the good wishes of wise men. Be just, be good, and you will be great and happy †!

“You would obtain, dread Sir, the title of Great: but you would receive it from the mouth of history, and from the suffrage of ages to come. You would despise it from the mouths of your courtiers. If you

do that which the son of your slave could do, ten times a day, better than yourself, they will tell you that you have performed an extraordinary action! If you suffer your passions to mislead you, they will say that you are right! If you are as lavish of the blood of your subjects as of the waters of your rivers, again will they tell you that you are right! If you barter for gold, the air that preserves life, they will say that you are right! If you revenge yourself—you who are so powerful!—they will continue to tell you that you are right! . . . They said the same thing when Alexander, in a drunken fit, plunged his dagger into the bosom of his friend! They said the same thing, when Nero murdered his mother\*.”

Mirabeau advises the King to acquire, from the very outset of his reign, laborious habits which shall serve as an example to all those about him.

“ If you indefatigably perform your duties, without ever putting off till the following day, the burthen of the present day—if by great and fruitful principles you can simplify these duties, and reduce them within the capacity of a single man—if you give your subjects all the freedom they can bear—if you can protect every kind of property, and facilitate useful labour—if you terrify petty oppressors who, in your name, would prevent men from doing, for their own advantage, that which injures not their fellows;—a unanimous shout will bless your authority, and render it more sacred, and

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\* Page 15.

more powerful. Every thing will then be easy for you, because the will and the strength of all will be united to your own strength and your own will, and your labour will become every day less severe. Nature has made labour necessary to man. It gives him also this precious advantage, that change of labour is to him not only a relaxation but a source of pleasure. Who, more easily than a King can live in strict accordance with this order of nature? A philosopher had said that 'no man feels such lassitude of spirit as a King?' he should have said, 'a slothful King.' How could lassitude of mind fall upon a sovereign who did his duty? Could he ever keep up his vigour of intellect, and preserve his health so well as by shielding himself, under the pursuit of labour, from the disgust which every man of sense must feel among those idle talkers, those inventors of fulsome praises, who study their Prince for no other purpose than to corrupt, blind, and rob him? Their sole art is to render him indifferent and feeble, or else impatient, rude and idle. \* \* \* \* Your subjects will enjoy your virtues, which alone can preserve and improve their patrimony. Your courtiers will cultivate your defects, by which alone they can support their influence and their expectations \*."

Mirabeau, faithful to a principle to which he constantly recurs, recommends the King not to extend the direct action of the royal power to matters which

do not require it. "It is worthy of you not to govern too much \*."

Among other necessary improvements, he distinguishes those brought about by time and experience, from those which ought to be effected immediately. He recommends the immediate "abolition of military slavery: that is to say, the obligation imposed upon every Prussian to serve as a soldier, from the age of eighteen years to sixty and more—that dreadful law arising from the necessities of an iron age, and a semi-barbarous country—that law dishonouring a nation without which your ancestors would have been nothing but slaves, more or less decorated with empty honours. This law does not produce you a single soldier more than you would obtain by a wiser system, which may enable you to recruit the Prussian army in a manner that shall elevate men's hearts, add to the public spirit, and possess the forms of freedom, instead of those of brutishness and slavery †. Throughout Europe, and more especially in your Majesty's dominions, one of the most useful instincts upon which patriotism could be founded, is stupidly lost. Men are forced to go to the battle-

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\* Page 20. O ministers, O European Princes!—your moderation is and will be the only pledge of your impunity. Use your power discreetly if you would preserve it. There is no servitude that does not leave a door open to freedom."—*Lettres de Cachet*, vol. i. p. 144.

† P. 24.



field, like cattle to the slaughter-house; whilst nothing is easier than to make the public service an object of emulation and glory \*."

Mirabeau then presents and proposes the great political measure of which, shortly after, he was the principal promoter in his own country; that is to say, the establishment of a national guard †,—that army, alone

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\* P. 25.

† P. 27. We shall show elsewhere that he was the first who demanded for France this institution, the results of which the vast extent of his mind had enabled him to calculate. It may even be asserted that he instituted the national guard, even before the Constituent Assembly did so; for it was by such an institution that, two years subsequently to the date of the writing of which we are now giving a review, he saved Marseilles from being plundered by brigands, and from the horrors of civil war. We shall not anticipate this event, the most glorious of Mirabeau's life; but we cannot refrain from proving here, by his own evidence, the correctness of our assertion. We take the following quotation from his speech on the proceedings of the Provost's Court at Marseilles, made in the National Assembly, January 12th 1790. In this speech Mirabeau relates the facts, without alluding to the personal share he took in them.

" Marseilles, as a frontier city, and a sea-port, always contains a number of foreigners, unknown individuals, and sailors belonging to different nations—persons without fortune, and ready to undertake anything. These men assembled on the day following the popular excitement I have just mentioned [the riots of the 21st of March]. They were heard to threaten that they would plunder the warehouses of the merchants. A body of young men immediately united, and offered their services to repulse this mob. Their offers were accepted; the brigands were surrounded and dispersed, and the formation of these young men into a civic guard was their reward. It was not enough to have preserved the city from devastation; it was necessary to prevent a recurrence of the danger, and Marseilles,

able to avert the danger with which standing armies have not ceased to threaten the freedom of nations, ever since the days of Charles VII—that army of the law, of the city, of the people, of the country—that army to which France owes its conquests, and what is still more difficult, the preservation of its liberties, which henceforth cannot perish but with this admirable institution.

“ Let your peasants,” Mirabeau continues, “ form in their respective parishes, national companies, who shall exercise on Sundays. Let the national companies elect their own grenadiers; let these elections be made by a plurality of suffrages, and all arbitrary preferences will then be exploded, and every choice will become a distinction.”

He next inveighs against one of the harshest laws in Prussia.

“ Allow to leave the country every one who is not detained in a legal manner by private obligations. Confer this freedom by a formal edict. This is one of those laws of eternal equity claimed by the force of things, which will do you infinite honour, and not cost you a single privation. Your subjects would not go and seek for a better condition than it is in your power to afford them; and even if it could be better

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worthy of setting a great example, had the honour of anticipating the national militia.” Vol. iii., p. 103, *of the original edition of “ Complete Collection of the Works of M. Mirabeau the Elder, at the National Assembly,” by Ellermé Méjan. Paris, Le Jay 1791. 5 Vols. 8vo.*

elsewhere, your prohibitions against leaving the country would prove no real impediment to them. The most tyrannical laws concerning emigration have never produced any other effect than that of exciting the people to emigrate, against the feeling given them by nature, the most imperious perhaps of all : that of attachment to the country of their birth. The Laplander cherishes the rugged climate in which he first drew breath. How then can the native of a province enlightened by a more genial sky, think of quitting the land of his nativity, if a tyrannical government did not render useless or hateful to him the choice gifts of nature? A law of freedom, far from dispersing men, will retain them in what they will term their *good country*, which they will prefer to the most fertile lands. Man endures every thing from Providence, but nothing unjust from his fellow-man ; and if he submits to the latter, it is only with a rebellious heart. Man is not attached to the earth by roots ; therefore he belongs not to the soil. Neither is man a meadow, a field, or cattle ; therefore he cannot be a property. Man has an internal sense of these simple truths, and no one can persuade him that his chiefs have a right to chain him to the glebe ; in vain would all the powers of the earth unite to inculcate this infamous doctrine. The time no longer is, when the lords of the earth could speak in the name of God—if such a period ever existed. The language of reason and justice is the only one that can

now-a-days obtain permanent success; and sovereigns cannot be too strongly persuaded, if they have not resolved soon to reign over deserts, that the example of British America commands all governments to be just and prudent \*."

Led forward, by the force of his intellect, to anticipate the progress of time, Mirabeau censures those antiquated and barbarous institutions, the abolition of which was not obtained by public reason till long afterwards. He more especially denounces to the new King, the right of seizing the property of deceased foreigners.

"What do you obtain by these remains of feudality? Before you extirpate them, do not wait for a system of reciprocity which never produces any other effect than to keep nations longer in a state of unreasonableness and war. That which is good to be done for the prosperity of a nation, has no need of reciprocity. If a state loses by the fact that, in another state, men and property are tyrannised over, it is for its own government to begin by putting a stop to such deplorable things at home. Must not some one begin? It is noble and worthy of a King, to set the example in whatever is just and honest."

Mirabeau further demands for the burghers, the freedom of "purchasing the estates of nobles. What is

the result of this absurd prohibition?—a depreciation of the value of landed property : that is to say, a depreciation of the first wealth of a state ; then a decline of agriculture, already discouraged by other causes. All this is an aggravation of the terrible prejudice that mutilates the burghers, and stupifies the nobles by converting their honorary rights into a source of exclusive consideration, which renders it unnecessary for them to obtain any other. It raises a positive necessity, for those who are not noble, either to betake themselves, or else to send their wealth, to a foreign land ; as, when they have acquired some capital, they cannot employ it either in trade, which is crippled by monopoly, or in agriculture, because they are not allowed to become proprietors of the soil. . . . . Wherever burghers can purchase land, trade is honoured and the country in a high state of cultivation ; it offers an aspect of abundance and prosperity ; commercial industry awakens every other. The earth also demands those ingenious processes which excite vegetation and extend it over the most ungrateful soils. These processes were never invented in countries of nobles : we owe them to constitutions where illustrious lineage disappears before the merit and talents which it does not possess\*.”

He next raises his voice against the abuse of the prerogatives claimed by the nobles, and against the political helotism of all who are not noble.

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\* P. 35.

“Abolish those foolish prerogatives which fill the great offices of the state with men of mediocrity, to say no worse, and destroy the affection of the great body of your subjects for a country in which they encounter nothing but obstacles and humiliation. Have a care of that universal aristocracy, the scourge of monarchical still more than of republican government, and which from one extremity of the globe to the other, oppresses the human species. The interests of the most absolute Monarch, lie wholly in these popular maxims. It is not the sovereigns whom the people dread and repulse, but their ministers, their courtiers, their nobles—their aristocracy, in short. ‘If the King knew it!’ they exclaim. They always invoke the royal authority, to which they are ever ready to lend their assistance against the aristocracy. Whence comes the Monarch’s strength, but from the people? Whence comes his personal safety, but from the people? Whence come his wealth and splendour, but from the people? Whence come the blessings which alone can make him feel happiness, but from the people? And who are his enemies, but the great, the aristocrats, who would have the King with them only the *primus inter pares*, and who, wherever they could do so, have left him no other pre-eminence than his rank, keeping that of power for themselves? By what strange mistake do Kings degrade their friends, and deliver themselves over to their foes? It is in the interest of the people, it is also

their wish, that their sovereign should not be deceived ; but the great have a contrary interest and wish. The people are easily satisfied ; they give and do not ask. Prevent the titled idler from weighing upon them ; open to them the career pointed out to man by the Supreme Being when he created him, and they will not complain\*.”

In another part Mirabeau attacks the prejudice “ that places so great a distance between military and civil offices. Such a prejudice under a weak King, whom your Majesty’s house, like any other, might produce, would expose the nation, and even the throne, to all the convulsions of pretorian anarchy†. In a state like yours, it is possible that the military ought to take precedence ; but they must not enjoy exclusive consideration, otherwise you will have an army, but no kingdom‡.”

He urges that the judges should be appointed for life §, and justice rendered free of expense. “ If the

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\* P. 37.

† P. 40.

‡ P. 41.

§ Mirabeau had already pleaded this great principle, and indirectly proposed the introduction of trial by jury.

“ The judges ought not, if we would have them honest, to be removable so long as they do not prevaricate in the execution of their duties. Their independence in the administration of justice is as necessary a pledge, as their integrity, of the liberties, lives, and properties of their fellow-citizens. These magistrates should be the organs of the law and not its interpreters, otherwise they would be legislators. Their duties should be reduced to determine whether

judges have only a salary to receive, justice will be rendered promptly and equitably. They should be paid from the public revenue and not by fees \*."

He presses the King to establish workshops for the public works.

" Be also the first Sovereign in whose dominions every man willing to work shall find employment. Every thing that breathes must obtain its nourishment by labour. This is the first law of nature, anterior to all human convention; it is the connecting bond of all society †; for every man who finds nothing but a refusal to his offer to work in exchange for his subsistence, becomes the natural and lawful enemy of other men, and has a right of private war against society ‡. In the country, as in cities, let workshops be everywhere opened at your Majesty's cost; let all men, of what nation soever, find their maintenance in the price of their labour; let your subjects there learn the value of time and activity §.

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such or such an act is contrary to the written law, which inflicts upon him who violates it such a penalty or such a chastisement. The law should therefore be precise and positive, in order that the judges may have to decide only upon a question of fact. Were it otherwise, no individual would know precisely his duties or his rights, and the citizens would be in a state of real servitude with reference to the magistrates."—*Lettres de Cachet*, p. 33.

\* Letter to Frederick William II, p. 42.

† P. 48.

‡ P. 44.

§ P. 44.



He next recommends public instruction, and the liberty of the press.

“Instruction, you are aware, is one of the most important of a Sovereign’s duties, and likewise one of his richest treasures \*. Entire liberty of the press ought to be one of your first acts ; not only because any restraint upon this liberty is a hindrance to the enjoyment of natural rights, but because every obstacle to the advancement of knowledge is an evil, a great evil, especially for you who are debarred thereby from obtaining, through the medium of printing, a knowledge of the truth, and of public opinion, that prime minister of good Kings . . . . . Let information be circulated through your dominions. Read, and let others read. If light were rising on all sides towards the throne, would you invoke darkness? Oh, no!—for it would be in vain. You would lose too much, without

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\* P. 46. At the same period, he wrote elsewhere—

“Let us believe that, except accidents, which are the inevitable consequences of the general order, there is evil upon earth, only because there are errors ; that when knowledge, and morality with it, have penetrated through the different classes of society, weak minds will acquire courage from prudence, and the ambitious will acquire morals from interest ; power will acquire moderation from foresight, the rich will acquire benevolence from calculation ; and thus instruction will infallibly diminish, sooner or later, the evils of the human species, so as to render its condition the mildest possible for perishable creatures to attain.”—*Preface to the Work on Moses Mendelssohn*, p. 65.

† P. 48.

even obtaining the fatal success of extinguishing it. You will read, you will begin a noble association with books. They have destroyed cruel and disgraceful prejudices, they have smoothed the road before you, they have served you even before you were born. You will not be ungrateful towards the accumulated works of beneficent genius. You will read, and you will protect those who write ; for without them what would become of the human species, and what would it be ? They will instruct, they will assist, they will talk to you without seeing you. Without approaching your throne, they will introduce there the august truth. This truth will enter your palace alone, without escort, and without affected dignity ; it will bear neither title, nor ribands, but will be invisible and disinterested. You will read, but you will be desirous that your subjects should also read. You will not think you have done all by recruiting your academies from foreign countries : you will found schools, you will multiply them, especially in country places, and you will endow them. You would not reign in darkness ; and you will say, ‘ Let there be light ! ’ The light will burst forth at your voice, and its halo, playing round your brow, will form a more glorious ornament than all the laurels won by conquerors.”

Mirabeau next inveighs against lotteries, which he terms a devouring plague \*, and he sums up in a

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\* P. 50.

few words the strongest objections to them that can be urged.

“ That which pretended statesmen have dared to write and to print, will be urged to you ; ‘ that lotteries may be considered a free and voluntary tax ’ . . . . . A tax ! . . . . . What tax must that be which founds its greatest receipts upon madness or despair ? . . . . . What tax must that be which the wealthy are not bound to pay, and which the wisest men and the best citizens will never pay ? . . . . . A free tax ! . . . . . This is a singular kind of freedom ! . . . . . Every day, and every minute of the day, the people are told that it depends only upon themselves to become rich at a small expense ! A million is proposed at the cost of a single livre to the poor wretch who cannot calculate and is in want of the necessaries of life ; and the sacrifice which he makes to this mad hope, of the only money he possesses in the world—of that money which would appease the cries of his hungry children—is called a free and voluntary gift !—It is a tax he pays to his Sovereign !

“ You will be further told that this horrible invention which poisons every thing, even hope, that last of human possessions, is no doubt an evil ; but that it is much better you should yourself reap the harvest of your own lottery, than allow it to be reaped by foreign lotteries. . . . . Reject, I entreat you, this corrupt arithmetic, this detestable sophistry. Surely, there are

means of preventing the effect of foreign lotteries. Their secret collectors need not be feared; for, if the penalty is severe, they will not make much progress; and it is in such a case alone that a reward for informing against those who violate the law, is productive of no evil, because it becomes the denunciation of a circulating plague. The natural penalty to be inflicted on those who favour speculations in foreign lotteries, is infamy, and exclusion from municipal offices, from trading corporations, and from the public exchange. Such a penalty is severe, and would, no doubt, prove effective. But if extreme remedies were necessary to put a stop to this crime, capital punishment, that infliction so repugnant to my soul, and the thought of which freezes my very heart's blood,—that infliction applied to so many crimes, and which perhaps no crime justifies, would be more excusable by the horrible list of disorders and misfortunes arising from lotteries, than by even the most exaggerated consequences of domestic theft\*.”

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\* P. 50. This advice upon lotteries, of no more avail than that upon any of the other subjects in this letter, formed the topic of a conversation between the King and Mirabeau, who states it in the “Correspondence from Berlin,” Vol. II. p. 337.

“The King said to me yesterday: ‘who is one M. de Lazeaux?’

“‘Dusaux, perhaps, your Majesty means?’

“‘Yes, Dusaux.’

“‘He is a member of our Academy of Inscriptions.’

“‘He sent me yesterday a very thick volume upon gaming.’

Mirabeau defends before an absolute King the cause which, in his early youth, he had pleaded in prison,

“ ‘ Alas ! Sir, it behoves you Monarchs, masters of the earth, to destroy gaming. Our books will not produce any great effect.’ ”

“ ‘ The fact is, he embarrasses me ; he pays me a compliment which I do not at all deserve—he congratulates me upon having put an end to the *lotto*. I wish it were true, but I have done no such thing.’ ”

“ ‘ Ah ! Sir, your Majesty’s wishing it is a great point gained.’ ”

“ ‘ On this subject I owe you an apology, for it is one of the good counsels in a certain manuscript. . . . But you must excuse me still a little while : funds are assigned upon the produce of this nasty *lotto*, to the military school, for instance.’ ”

“ ‘ Fortunately, Sir, a momentary deficit of fifty thousand crowns is not very embarrassing to the richest, in coined money, of all earthly Monarchs.

“ ‘ Yes, but conventions ?’ ”

“ ‘ None, Sir, are violated when payment is made, and indemnity given as between party and party. And then despotism has been so much used to produce evil, that it would be no great matter if it were for once applied to the promotion of good.’ ”

“ ‘ So, then, you are becoming somewhat reconciled to despotism ?’ ”

“ ‘ I must needs become so, Sir, in a country where a single head has four hundred thousand arms.’ ”

“ At this he laughed rather sillily. He was then reminded of going to the theatre, and our conversation ended. . . . . You see that even in this man of little mind there exists a desire to be praised ! ”

Five months previously, in fact, a report had been spread of the suppression of the lottery. Proof of this exists in a letter from Mirabeau, to be found in page 25 of the collection written to Mauvillon. It contains the following passage :

“ It is stated, as positive, that a decree is signed for the suppression of the *lotto* at Berlin. May all the blessings of Heaven be poured upon a reign which begins thus ! ”

and on which, while in the Donjon of Vincennes, he wrote an eloquent and special dissertation.

“ Declare immediately,” he says to the King, “ and stamp your declaration with the most imposing insignia of the Sovereign Authority, that unlimited toleration shall, in your dominions, be extended to all religions. You have a very natural and not less valuable opportunity of making this declaration. Let it form part of an edict granting civil liberty to the Jews. This act of beneficence, which, from the very beginning of your reign, will make you surpass in religious toleration even your illustrious predecessor, who was the most tolerant sovereign that has yet existed, will not remain unrewarded: besides the great increase of population and of capital that it will draw to your country, at the expense of other countries, the Jews, from the second generation, will become good and useful citizens. For this you need only encourage them to pursue the mechanical arts and agriculture,—both of which are now forbidden them—free them from the special taxes now weighing upon them, and place them, like all your other subjects, within the jurisdiction of the civil tribunals, depriving their Rabbis of all secular authority. Do not, I entreat you, delay your declaration of the most universal religious toleration; for those who will benefit by it, are at present afraid of losing, in this kind of freedom, more than they will gain. They have taken alarm at what they term your preju-

dices and your doctrines. Disavow the statements of those who have announced you as intolerant \*. Show them that your respect for religious opinions is derived from that of the Almighty Creator, and that you are far from laying down any particular form of worshipping him. Show that whatever your philosophical or religious opinions may be, you never pretended to the absurd and tyrannical right of forcing other mortals to adopt them †."

After thus setting forth the improvements which the King might effectuate immediately, Mirabeau enters into an examination of the reforms equally useful, but less urgent, less easy of execution, and which he is of opinion should be brought about gradually. He blames the whole system of political economy adopted by the late King—"a system so totally wrong—in-direct taxes, absurd prohibitions, regulations of all kinds, exclusive privileges, and monopolies without number ‡."

He inveighs against the King's fixing the rate of charges at inns, the wages of footmen, and the price of all the necessaries of life,—against the prohibition of the produce of neighbouring countries, not raised in Prussia; against the difference in the amount of the direct taxes paid by the clergy, the nobles and the

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\* Frederick William was at once a partisan and a dupe of that visionary and intolerant sect called the Illuminati.

† Page 52.

‡ Page 55.

people ; against the neglect of immense tracts of land that remain untilled, and which judicious divisions and cessions at a quit-rent would soon render productive ; against the concentration of an enormous mass of specie in the royal exchequer, a useless hoard withdrawn from the circulation, and the want of which leaves in a state of inaction and moral languor that industry into which the circulation of capital would instil life and vigour. He proposes that the King should diminish “ the indirect taxes, the custom and excise duties, the produce of which would increase in an inverse ratio to the amount of such duties, and to the severity exercised in collecting them \*. Increase the land tax, from which no landed property should be exempt † ; facilitate trade by permits, abolish monopolies, give freedom to industry, arts, trades, and commerce, which cannot live except under the shadow of liberty, and asks of Kings merely that they will do it no injury ‡. Your Majesty will give freedom to all, and privileges to none. Those who demand the latter, are almost always either ignorant or dishonest, and there can be no more certain means of destroying industry than by granting privileges §.”

Mirabeau concludes with this eloquent apostrophe.

“ I trust, dread Sir, that my candour will not displease you. . . . . If it moves you, O Frederick !

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\* Page 71.

† Page 72.

‡ Page 75.

§ Page 76.



meditate upon these sincere and free, but respectful, lines, and say :

“ ‘ This is what will never be admitted to me as true, and is the very reverse of what I shall be told every day. The boldest offer to Kings nothing but veiled truths, whilst here I see truth quite naked . . . This is far preferable to that venal incense with which I am suffocated by versifiers, and panegyrists of the Academy, who seized upon me in my cradle, and will scarcely leave me when I am in my coffin. I am a man before I am a King. Why should I be offended at being treated as a man? Why should I be offended with a foreigner, who wants nothing of me, and will soon quit my court never more to see me, for speaking to me without disguise? He points out to me that which his eyes, his experience, his studies, and his understanding have collected; he gives me, without expectation of reward, those true and free counsels of which no condition of man is so much in want as Kings. He has no interest in deceiving me, and can have none but good intentions. . . . Let me examine attentively what he proposes; for mere common sense, and the simple candour of a man who has no other pursuit than the cultivation of his reason and his intellect, may, perhaps, be as good as the old routine, and trickery, and forms, and diplomatic illusions, and the ridiculous dogmas of statesmen by profession \*.’ ”

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\* Page 83.

It may, perhaps, strike the reader that, contrary to our usual practice, we have given some extent to our extracts from this work, long since published. Our reasons for doing so are, on the one hand, because this letter to the King of Prussia is much less known than others of Mirabeau's works very inferior to it; and, on the other hand, because, like the work on Moses Mendelssohn, this letter is a statement of principles the rectitude of which time has proved, of anticipations which events have rendered prophecies, of counsels which have become political laws, and of theories which have become constitutions. Finally, it appeared to us only an act of justice to point out once more how the instinct of a mind and the inspirations of a genius, worthy of one another, successively led Mirabeau from speculation to practice, and from his obscure and spontaneous office of "citizen of the world \*" to the dignity of chief of the most extensive, the most imposing, and the most fruitful of political revolutions.

We must here notice another writing, published several months subsequently, bearing the title of "Advice to a young Prince who feels the necessity of being educated over again †."

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\* Correspondence from Berlin, p. 349.

† 8vo, 1788, 88 pages. Peuchet, who often speaks of Mirabeau's writings, without having read them, confounds the "Advice to a young Prince," &c., with the Letter to Frederick William II. See vol. iii. p. 59. of Peuchet's work.

This work does not contain the elevated generalities of the preceding. It is a collection of observations on the kind of intellect necessary for Princes, on their influence over morals, on the conduct they ought to adopt towards women, on the care they ought to take to be accessible, and to acquire popularity; on the advantage to them of questioning much and well; on the sort of instruction necessary to them; on the historical studies which they ought to pursue, and so forth.

This work, which is far from methodical and complete, and the imperfect and unconnected composition of which will not well bear analysing, is written in a style often powerful, but harsh, unequal, and incorrect. It abounds in exceedingly entangled metaphysical reasonings, in singularity of expression, and in forced comparisons. It has neither nature, elegance, nor clearness. The reader will, therefore, be less surprised when we state a fact hitherto unknown to the public, namely, that this production, though published in Mirabeau's name, and probably without his knowledge, was not written by him. It consists of an extract which he had made from an unfinished work by his father, entitled "L'Appareil." This fact, the proof of which is before us\*, and the want of interest in the work itself, have determined us not to notice it further.

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\* We have this extract in Mirabeau's handwriting consisting of fifty-two folio pages. Mirabeau had attached it to his father's manuscript, which is also in our possession.

In closing our narrative of Mirabeau's residence at Berlin, we must not forget a real service which he rendered to his country, by prevailing upon the French Government to give an appointment at Paris to the illustrious La Grange\*, who had long resided in

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\* Joseph Louis La Grange, the celebrated author of "Analytical Mechanics," "Theory of Analytical Functions," and "Resolution of Numerical Equations." He was born in 1736, and died in 1813. Mirabeau speaks of him in the following terms:—

"I have few intimates here (at Berlin), and not one of true and profound friendship, except M. de la Grange, who is really a wonderful man—as good as he is great."—*Letters to Mauvillon*, p. 172.

"It seems to me that there is here, at this moment, an acquisition worthy of the King of France, and which M. de Calonne is worthy to propose to him. The illustrious La Grange, the greatest geometer that has appeared since Newton, who is, in every respect, of all the men I have seen, the one who has most surprised me;—La Grange, the wisest and perhaps the only real practical philosopher that ever lived, recommendable by his imperturbable wisdom, his morals, and his general conduct, and who, in fine, is held in the most affectionate respect by the small number of men he allows to approach him;—has resided, during the last twenty years, at Berlin, whither he was called in early youth by the late King to replace Euler, who had designated him as the only man able to walk in a line with himself. He is much dissatisfied, though he utters no complaint; but his dissatisfaction is irremediable, because it springs from contempt.

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\* \* Every thing invites him to withdraw from a country where nothing can atone for the crime of being a foreigner, and where he will never submit to be only tolerated.

"Under these circumstances, there is no doubt that he would willingly exchange the sun and money of Prussia for the sun and money

Prussia. Although this fact is well known, we trust that the statement is not out of place here. The following is the conclusion of his despatch upon the subject.

“ Is it beneath Louis XVI to withdraw from a miserable academy a great man who is there unappreciated, and unworthily connected, and thus destroy, by the most noble mode of warfare, the only literary body that has contended with his own? Is not this a more judicious kind of generosity than many others? France has, with such bad policy, afforded an asylum to so

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of France, the only country in the world in which a due worship is rendered to the genius of arts and science, and durable reputations are built,—the only country in which La Grange, the grandson of a Frenchman, and who recollects with gratitude that we first made him known throughout Europe, can love to dwell, if he must renounce his habits. Prince Cardito de Leffredo, the Neapolitan minister at Copenhagen, has made him very tempting offers in the name of his sovereign. The Grand Duke, and the King of Sardinia, warmly press him to come to their dominions; but all these offers would be readily forgotten in favour of ours.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ La Grange enjoys here an annual pension of 6000 livres. Cannot the King of France afford to give this sum to the first geometer in Europe of the present century?

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“ \* \* I am much struck with this idea, because I think it a noble one, and because I am affectionately attached to him who is the object of it. I beg for a reply as soon as possible; for I confess that I have induced M. de la Grange to delay replying to the other proposals made to him, in order that he may wait for ours.”—*Correspondence from Berlin*, vol. ii. p. 178, and following.

many Princes who could not but put her to expense! —why, therefore, should she not obtain a great man who cannot but prove valuable to her? . Having so long enriched others by her losses, why should she not enrich herself by the mistakes of others? ”

## BOOK V.

WE have stated that it was principally the meeting of the Notables that hastened Mirabeau's return to Paris. He felt (and this may easily be conceived) that his proper place was in the centre of the great events announced and begun by this convocation, the results of which, striking as they were to every apprehension, could not be more surely anticipated and measured than by his powerful mind.

The undignified and inglorious prodigality of the preceding reign, had laid the foundation of great financial vicissitudes. Louis XVI had brought with him to the throne the private virtues of a good and honest man, but not the qualities of a Sovereign. Though economical to excess, as regarded himself, he nevertheless suffered to exist, and even to increase around him, those dilapidations which at last ruined the resources of the state. Though a course of arduous study had given him considerable information,

he had no confidence in himself\*. Full of love for his people, even his sense of their wretchedness, and his anxiety and endeavours to procure them partial relief, could not raise in him the resolution necessary to determine upon great reforms, nor the vigour necessary to execute them. A line of policy had been pursued, the consequences of which were calculated seriously to endanger even a healthful state of finances, and must therefore inevitably overthrow the already involved finances of France.

The war in favour of American independence, undertaken by the King against his own wish, but from deference to public opinion, had cost the country more than twelve hundred millions of livres, raised by loans in every possible form. The administration that had incurred this debt, took much credit to themselves for having provided means to meet every contingency without increasing the taxes—an unworthy excuse, as well as a rash falsehood, because such loans were nothing better than a disguised impost. Like spend-thrifts who rejoice in finding means to dissipate money,

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\* Mirabeau respectfully reproached him with this fatal timidity.

“ We dare urge him, on this as on every other occasion, to see with his own eyes, judge by his own knowledge, resist his very estimable but too great diffidence of himself, and consider this truth an axiom—that energy of character always constitutes sufficient talents, especially to reign—and to reign as a great and good King.”  
*Page 208 of the Postscript to the Work entitled “ On the Caisse d’Escompte.”*



who boast of their credit, and perhaps believe in it so long as they find dupers or dupes, these ministers plunged deeper and deeper into this fatal vortex. The interest on these loans now continually increased the annual expenditure ; and to prevent the latter from exceeding the revenue, either this must be increased, or else the expense diminished by bold and extensive measures of economy. But nothing was done : neither the revenue was increased nor the expenditure diminished, and a deficit was the necessary consequence. This deficit, which could never be covered except by new loans, increased from year to year by the accumulation of interest. Capital was sunk to pay arrears of interest ; the country was striding rapidly towards its ruin, and the final catastrophe was rendered more dreadful only by delay.

This alarming truth was too evident for the different ministers of Louis XVI not to have perceived it. To diminish the expenditure was indispensable, and ought to have been easy, by suppressing a considerable number of disbursements justified by no necessary and lawful motive. To increase the revenue was equally necessary, and might have been effected by abolishing absurd and unjust privileges which ought to have melted away before the advance of time, the progress of knowledge, the public conviction, the King's honesty, and the danger of the state. But these reforms, so easy in principle, seemed impossible in fact. On the

one hand, needless and abusive expenses were obstinately supported, in all classes, and more especially at court, by an intelligent and compact coalition of those who profited by them. On the other hand, the privileges were as strongly supported by the double resistance of the personal interest and the pride of the privileged orders. The latter, with some rare and generous exceptions, were less disposed to pay taxes, because they themselves collected taxes under the name of "Feudal Rights," which public opinion assigned to the exhausted exchequer, and begrudged to an aristocracy disinherited of its prestiges by time and an equivocal admixture of blood.

By strenuous resistance did the courtiers, the great lords, and the parliaments, oppose, then discourage, then drive from office, the best intentioned, the most virtuous, and the most able ministers whom the young King, in the sincerity of his patriotism, had chosen on his accession, in deference to the public feeling. Among these ministers were Malesherbes and Turgot. The same thing occurred to Necker, who had knowledge and virtue, and who, after employing all the resources of credit to raise funds for the war, was overthrown the moment that, by the combined actions of reforms and taxes, he endeavoured to establish an equilibrium betwixt the ordinary receipts and disbursements, and provide for the arrears and the liquidation of the public debt. This grave and honest minister, pedantic

and unskilful in handling men, had succeeded a witty, but thoughtless and frivolous courtier, confident and bold, and who sought to eradicate abuses by giving them greater scope. He had lent himself with complaisance to the most impudent public robberies, fancying that they would thereby cease. Under a different form, however, Necker continued the system of his predecessor,—that is to say, he met the current service by means of loans, but was anxious to fill up the deficit and gradually to pay off the public debt.

M. de Calonne, in his turn, ran close to the quicksand upon which his three predecessors had been wrecked. He perceived the obstacles, hitherto considered invincible, about to be opposed to his plans of economy by the court which lived by abuses, and his plans of taxation by the privileged who were supported by the parliaments, of which many were members—or rather the parliaments were almost wholly composed of privileged individuals.

It cannot be decided which of these bodies of opponents was the most formidable.

Under so feeble a King, the influence of the courtiers was no doubt irresistible; and events have proved but too fully, that from having been unable to resist this influence, from not having preferred his own conviction to theirs, from not having listened to the counsels of his friends, to the voice of the past, to the lessons given by passing events, to the most infallible warnings,

the King successively lost his repose, his happiness, his crown, and his life.

The parliaments, on the other hand, became more and more embarrassing to the government. After having for a long time arrogated to themselves the guardianship of the King and the state ; after having, on the impulse of the calculations and passions of the moment, made use of the people against the nobles and the clergy—or of one or other of these, or both, against the people—or all three against the King's ministers : after having been overthrown by the brutal, but powerful, arm of Chancellor Maupeou, these parliaments had been reinstated. This was almost the first act of a young King, whose fate it was to prepare his own ruin by measures which he thought he was conceding to the wishes of the nation, and for which he then received praises and blessings.

No sooner were the parliaments reinstated, than they resumed their former pride and their former pretensions, and the more so, perhaps, because, in the royal edict, which recalled them, they saw more of imprudence and of weakness than of sound policy \*. The parliaments

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\* Mirabeau, in his unpublished "Letter written by a former Magistrate," &c. says—

"The people rejoice at the return of the parliaments, because they are the people—because they hoped that the misfortunes of the parliaments would have corrected them—because they did not foresee that the pride of these bodies of magistrates would be greatly increased by their unconditional restoration, which seemed to proclaim that

were filled with ardent and presumptuous young men, who from *esprit de corps*, the interests of their order, and ambition of popularity, became more and more hostile to the different administrations which rapidly succeeded each other. They formed the rallying centre of the political opposition, and became its most violent organs. By a most inexplicable inconsistency, on the one hand, they declared themselves, in the name of the people, incompetent to register taxes, the legal sanction to which they had for several centuries claimed the right of giving or withholding, and which soon afterwards they again registered \*; on the other hand, whilst they loudly demanded the convocation of the States General, they required that the proceed-

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the commonwealth could not do without them. The hope of the poor people was soon destroyed a second time."

He gives his opinion also in the writing which Soulavie has transformed into "Memoirs of the Duke d'Aguillon."

"The return of the parliaments in 1774, required years of meditation, reflection, and secret and preliminary negotiation. Three months, however, sufficed to place them in the same physical situation they enjoyed December 3rd 1770, with an increase of authority which cannot belong to parliaments, and which will at last destroy the King's authority."—page 184.

"On the recal of the parliaments, M. de Choiseul said, 'Maupeou upset the cart on the left side, but Hue [de Miromesnil] has overturned it on the right side;' and M. de Choiseul was right."—Page 55.

\* Witness the decree, dated September 20th 1787, for raising a twentieth, which the Parliament of Paris registered, in order to be recalled from Troyes, whither it had been exiled.

ings of the latter should be subjected to old rules \*, which would have reduced the action of the Tiers-Etat to a mere form, and the proceedings of the Assembly to a vain deception.

With a daily increasing deficit, the resistance of the Court, and a refusal to register edicts of taxation, M. de Calonne had but the choice of two alternatives : a national bankruptcy, or the convocation of the States-General. The King's probity made him regard the former with horror, whilst his prejudices of birth, strengthened by the suggestions of his courtiers, made him dread the latter. M. de Calonne, the minister of provisional remedies, of palliatives, of delaying payments, of half measures—M. de Calonne, thoughtless, confident, romantic, fancied he was doing wonders when he hit upon a medium between the two extremes of necessity. He accordingly proposed to the King to constitute an Assembly of Notables, consisting of a selection of individuals made from the nobles, the hierarchy, and the magistrates, and of deputies sent by the town municipalities, and elected from among individuals distinguished by holding public charges,

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\* Those of the States of 1614. The truth is, that the Parliaments really wished that the States-General should not assemble; and Mirabeau tells us why.

“ The Parliament prefers surrounding its pretensions with clouds, to seeing them fixed by a national decision.”—*Reply to the Alarm of Good Citizens*, p. 26.

or offices under government, or by their wealth\*, Such a combination was essentially wrong, and led to a complete failure in the object aimed at. For to obtain the only practicable remedy, that is to say, on the one hand, a diminution of expenditure by the suppression of sinecures and pecuniary favours, and on the other, an increase of revenue by the abolition of abusive exemptions, was it not an absurd inconsistency to apply to the very men who profited by these favours and exemptions; and who showed by the event, that they were little inclined to sacrifice abuses and privileges so flattering to their vanity, and so useful to their fortunes?

Nevertheless, whatever hope had been founded upon this expedient, the knell of the administration, and even the monarchy itself, had sounded.

Mirabeau had arrived at Paris on the 27th of January preceding. During his journey, he had meditated upon the subject of a paper, which he wished to lay before the Assembly of Notables, and in which he intended to discuss the most pressing question of the moment—that is to say, the necessity of repairing the finances of the kingdom. The moment was come,

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\* Among a hundred and fifty-six Notables, there were seven Princes of the blood, seven Archbishops, seven Bishops, eight Marshals of France, twelve Dukes, some of them peers, some not, thirty-four First Presidents, or Procureurs-generaux, eight Councillors of state, four Intendants of provinces, twenty titled nobles, twelve country deputies of condition, twenty municipal officers, &c.

when the most implacable enemy of stock-jobbing was to inflict upon it a last and decisive blow, before an Assembly, whose deliberations were about to enlighten and, probably, direct a Monarch, hitherto ill-seconded in his benevolent intentions. Mirabeau wrote and published, within a period of three weeks, his “Denunciation of Stock-jobbing, to the King, and the Assembly of Notables\*.”

This is one of Mirabeau’s most important works. As it is also one of his best, and has not been duly appreciated, we consider that it requires a more extended notice from us; and to make known the occasion on which it was written, as well as its object and the intention of its author, we think it right to transcribe a few pages from Mirabeau’s letters to Mauvillon, a work, not a copy of which is to be purchased in France, and which no one of our predecessors has ever quoted or even known. In these letters, Mirabeau, speaking to a friend, and not to the public, wrote by anticipation, and without intending it, the preface, the most suitable, in our opinion, to the “Denunciation of Stock-jobbing.”

“The date of my letter† will surprise you a little,

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\* 1787. February 26th, date of the Dedicatory Epistle to the King. 8vo, 143 pages, with the following epigraph:—

Pensais-tu qu’un instant ma vertu démentie

Mettrait dans la balance un homme et la patrie?

VOLTAIRE.

† Liège, March 24th 1787.



my dear Major. I was unable, earlier, to give you an account of my new situation, however impatient I might have been to put you on your guard against absurd, 'calumnious, or mutilated traditions, and to make you the judge of my conduct. But I trusted that your friendship would induce you at least to suspend your judgment, and that you would be pleased with me for having trusted to this friendship.

"No sooner had I returned to Paris, than I perceived not only that the appointment\*, which it had been very difficult not to have conferred upon me, under circumstances of which I had given the first idea, and which were brought about by my exertions, was bestowed upon another†, but that the aspect of affairs had become such, the disordered state of the finances so alarming, and discontent so general, that the government, deprived, as a climax to its embarrassment, by the approaching death of M. de Vergennes, of the only support that could still give it any consistency, was solely struggling for its personal safety, without attempting to organise and constitute the Nation, which it will never do; that consequently it required drawers up of manifestoes and not assistants—intriguers and satellites, not citizens aides-de-camp. As I am one of those who can least

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\* That of Secretary to the Assembly of Notables.

† To Dupont de Nemours.

evinced the germ of talent or intellect when my conviction is not determined, I soon said to myself that I was worth nothing for such work.

“ I therefore thought only of resuming the profession, I had just quitted; and hopeless of becoming, for the moment, the instrument of a greater, more proximate, and more direct good, I applied to be sent to Nimeguen in a capacity purely pacific and passive, to which I was called by the confidence of some good Dutch citizens, and the favourable impressions towards me entertained by the Princess herself\*.

“ But this did not suit the minister of finance, who would have preferred leaving me at Berlin to seeing me return without being useful to him in what he was then doing; and more particularly, although my silence did not appear to him a favourable omen, even as regarded the public opinion, he would have preferred keeping me in the most complete inactivity, to allowing me to participate the least ostensibly, in operations all the merit of which the irritated nation would deprive him of, and leave him nothing but the disagreeable and laborious part. Thus I must either serve him, or not serve at all; and as the step he had taken of laying open the *state of the nation*, exposed him to the most serious attacks, and the strictest inquiry, I could

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\* The correspondence from Berlin mentions several times this project of sending Mirabeau to Nimeguen, and the wish that he should go thither expressed by the Princess of Orange, sister of Frederick William II.

hardly serve him except by supporting his strange accounts, which it was impossible to verify except by an examination that would last several months; by supporting a truly insensate administration in its very hazardous assertions and promises; and lastly and especially by proving, in a defence of its acts, that its only object in demanding of the nation an extraordinary effort, is to secure funds on a vast mortgage, by means of which it can go on,—‘according to its old system,’ say those who do not believe that a man improves at fifty-four years of age. Now all this suited me very ill, as I cannot assert much less prove what I do not think, nor defend what my conviction condemns, and as, to cut the matter short, I am convinced that the reputation of the man is the greatest obstacle to the thing.

“When therefore the minister of finance had me sounded by our mutual friends, I asked to be excused; but as under the circumstances of the case, this was impossible, if I remained present, I repeated my demand to travel.

“From this moment, the Comptroller-general, who thought he held me fast by means of our mutual friends and by necessity—as if there could be any necessity for a man to act against his conscience—considered me null and void; and 1st, breaking his formal word; 2nd, leaving me in embarrassments of all kind; 3rd, eluding my most simple demands, by a silence well or ill jus-

tified; 4th, replying to our mutual friends who frequently observed to him that it was not advisable to dissatisfy me: ‘ Oh! I will settle all that with money; ’ he successively, and especially by these last words which appeared to me an inexpressible insult, not only disengaged me from all connexion with himself, but gave me every possible reason for siding with the opposition.

“ I however would not do so, nor have I done so. I wish to remain myself, and be myself only. But I thought I could and ought to be so entirely; and being unwilling that the only Assembly, in some degree national, that will probably exist in my time, should pass by without my paying my tribute to the public thing, I took up the subject least within the scope of men accustomed to write, and to which, in my judgment, it was most important to direct the public attention at this moment; and I denounced stock-jobbing to the King and the Assembly of Notables in a work which is not good, which was and must have been written too fast to be good, which is surcharged with matter because it is not methodically arranged, in which I have more meditated my subject than my plan \*, but which was dictated by a strong and pure feeling that teaches sound and important truths, which will put well-

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\* Mirabeau afterwards almost literally transcribed this passage in his reply to the Lacretelle, p. i. We shall hereafter have occasion to speak of this reply.

disposed minds in the right path, and which, if it does not destroy stock-jobbing—and this the government alone can totally eradicate—will, at all events, make it infamous to gamble in the funds and to protect stock-jobbers; for men of good sense and good faith ought to be convinced, and sophists can no longer escape\*.”

The transcription inserted in Book III of the unpublished letter which Mirabeau intended to fulminate against M. de Calonne, renders it unnecessary to give in this place a lengthened notice of the “Denunciation of Stock-jobbing,” which with less method and precision, perhaps, treats precisely on the same subject, so much so indeed, that Mirabeau might have attained his object by publishing for the Notables, the letter he had destined for M. de Calonne, without writing a separate work, if he had not been desirous of avoiding the appearance of direct controversy, and of sparing the minister whose overthrow he foresaw †, and who,

\* Letters to Mauvillon, p. 197 to 285.

† The notables assembled February 22nd 1787, and M. de Calonne was dismissed May 1st. Peuchet, no doubt did not carefully read “The Denunciation of Stock-jobbing,” although he has devoted to it a dozen pages; for he says, that in it the author was prodigal in his praises of M. de Calonne. (Vol. II. p. 80). M. Joseph Merilhou too makes the same mistake (p. 73). Others, on the contrary, have bitterly reproached Mirabeau with insulting a minister who had treated him so well. There is as much untruth as levity in these extraordinary statements.

The fact is, that Mirabeau himself, excited as he was against M. de Calonne, blamed the species of ingratitude shown towards a

whatever reason Mirabeau had to be dissatisfied with him, is not once named in the "Denunciation of

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minister who had been flattered when he committed faults and persecuted the moment he attempted to repair them.

As for the convocation of the Notables, "the courage and dexterity," he says, "required by the execution, belongs to the minister; and when I see with what levity, or with what mistrust this benefaction is received, I am tempted to curse the thoughtlessness of my nation.

"The fermentation, however, is very strong in some good and civic heads, and I cannot, nor will I answer except for myself. But the feeling and intention of such an act deserve that it should not be censured, at least before it has proved a failure."—*Letters to Mauvillon*, p. 183.

Nevertheless, in doing justice to the meritorious, thought ardy intentions of the minister, when at length his eyes opened to the faults he had committed, Mirabeau, in his private letters expressed warmly the censure which, in public, he passed in very measured terms.

"Are you not, my friend, greatly tempted to think that in my work or in my conduct, there is some impetuosity, some direct attack upon the minister, some failures in form? But you ought also to consider that at this moment I am not labouring under excitement. Well! I shall not cancel a single line. The Minister of Finance is named only once, and then in terms of praise. To tell you the truth, the great faults of his administration are all there as necessary consequences of stock-jobbing!—and the four pages of prophecies, on the non-abolition of stock-jobbing are, to well informed persons, a faithful history of his administration. But he must have named himself, for this to have appeared an insult to him. This is so true that the first cry of the jobbers and fanatics who support M. Necker was, that this book was written by M. de Calonne's order."—*Letters to Mauvillon*, p. 205.

Stock-jobbing," in which, near the end only, is a single designation that could be applicable to M. de Calonne.

It is against the manœuvres practised at the Stock exchange, that Mirabeau vehemently inveighs. He describes their fatal consequences. "Yes, and I swear to the truth of what I allege, the jobbing practised at Paris on stock, the eventual produce of which misleads the imagination, cannot but engender the most abominable of industries. What compensation does it offer, when its only result, its ultimate produce, is a frenzied gambling, in which millions have no other circulation than to pass from one portfolio to another, without creating anything but a group of illusions which the folly of the day leads about with pomp, and that of the next day will dispel\*? But for this bait of gambling with paper, everywhere would undertakings have been attempted in agriculture or trade, profitable to everybody; marshes would have been drained, bridges built, canals cut, navigation improved, arts simplified, economical machinery invented, wages

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\* A proof, in fact, that Mirabeau's moderation, in this instance, was interpreted to his disadvantage, and attributed to a secret collusion between the minister and himself, exists in the "*Memoirs of Bachaumont*," vol. xxxiv, 1787, p. 265. We think that no doubt on the subject can remain in the minds of those who read the letter to M. de Calonne, inserted in Book III, of the present volume.

\* Denunciatio of Stock-jobbing, p. 27.

paid, new outlets opened to produce, and a new use made of raw materials \*. Such is the abuse of games of chance, and the spirit of lotteries. This fatal spirit, which came from Italy with the indirect taxation on consumption, has corrupted morals, caused mental aberration, made men unhappy, and will continue to produce the same evils, so long as the majority of Sovereigns are unaware that all the disorders of society diminish their authority, their power, and their wealth—so long as a prudent, virtuous, and severe education shall not teach nations that every game of chance is disgraceful in itself, because it is unworthy of an honest man either to seize the property of his neighbour, or to place in jeopardy that of his family†—so long as it shall not teach Kings that the expensive lotteries which reduce a large capital to uselessness and worse than uselessness, are still more dangerous than establishments of the same nature which absorb only the time and the bread of those who live by their daily earnings, but which, for this very reason, are deserving of the horror they generally inspire‡. To destroy stock-jobbing, is to save the state, restore its resources, and provide for its safety ; it is re-establishing good order ; it is restoring to the government, its dignity—to the public authority, its power—to the laws, their force ; it

\* Page 119.

† Page 117.

‡ Page 120.



is preparing the way for public spirit, securing external peace, taking it into the family circle, bringing back talents to their proper use, and showing respect to things which are decent and useful. At this moment, when we feel that we must ask our too much neglected soil for that which a spendthrift son asks of his father's affection, the payment of his debts,—is it not time to confer honour upon rural industry? Must we not apply to our fields the specie which Paris absorbs, and absorbs only for purposes of corruption \* ?”

Mirabeau now adverts to the operations of M. Necker's first administration, and begins a series of attacks against this celebrated financier.

“ Let us say, to be rigorously just, that one of the principal sources, and perhaps the real first cause of the revival of the stock-jobbing, which perished with Law's system, was that system, not less deceptive, invented by M. Necker, of meeting the expenses of the war by means of successive loans, without taxes †. How could he have expected that enlightened persons would not perceive that to delay taxation was only rendering the taxes ultimately more burthensome; and that, if he contrived to obtain a reputation of address and public sleight of hand, by putting off the impost, he left for his successors the still more diffi-

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\* Page 69.

† Page 72.

cult, and for that very reason the more meritorious, task of paying off those very debts which he had made it his glory to accumulate?

“How is it M. Necker never perceived that, the very moment the government raised loans, even the interest of which the public revenue could not pay, the impost virtually and necessarily existed, whether it was declared or not? In fact, if the state was to fulfil its engagements, it was impossible to avoid taxation in order to obtain that which under this supposition, did not yet exist; but then, the longer the impost was delayed, the heavier it must fall at last, from the accumulation of interest during the delay\*. If even the state were some day or other to free itself by violating its engagements, the impost would not be less real, but only much more unjust and absurd, because, instead of bearing equally upon the whole nation, it would not, under the form of a bankruptcy, reach any but the lenders†.”

Mirabeau next applies the censure, which our readers have already seen, to the abuses of the *Caisse d'Escompte*, diverted from its real and salutary destination—to those of the India Company, useful to a few monopolists, but injurious to a very numerous class of manufacturers and merchants—to the shares of the

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\* Page 73.

† Page 74.

Water Company of Paris, to those of the Fire Insurance Company, to those of the Senegal Company—and to the stock-jobbing frenzy upon the paper issued by these several establishments—lastly, he raises his voice against the complication, incoherence, and incapacity of the public administration.

“ So long,” he says, “ as the kingdom is not settled by a regular constitution, we shall be only a society composed of different orders badly united, of a people with scarcely any social ties, an aggregate of provinces united under the same chief, but almost strangers to each other.”

He demands local provincial administrations.

“ It is by the help of this simple and sublime institution that France, regenerated by the sole will of its sovereign, will assume a permanent and imposing form. Then the public morals, that first tie of nations, will rest upon their only proper foundation, which is knowledge, acquired in infancy, of the duties of social man. After having long had no other establishments than those for the education of geometers and natural philosophers and painters, we shall at length possess institutions for the education of citizens. We shall soon be indebted to the provincial assemblies for a national instruction, directed in the same spirit, and on uniform political views and principles. Here the study of the duties of a citizen, member

of the great family, will be the foundation of every other, and will henceforth be placed in its order of usefulness, that is to say, quite at the head of useful things."

Mirabeau concludes his address to the Notables, as follows :—

" O ye, whom the father of the country has assembled to deliberate upon the public thing—O ye, the elders of its children !—treat not my sad forewarnings as groundless fears. Boldly point out to the King their probability in its fullest extent ;—boldly tell him that, during the last three years, we have had too certain indications of what we may expect from the system of finance under which we live ; that it is necessary for his happiness and glory, not to leave the least trace of such a system ; that, if stock-jobbing is not put down, and the severest animadversion applied to those who participate in this most deplorable species of gambling—if the privileged companies are not destroyed, and those companies that are necessary subjected to severe regulations, the public credit will be ruined ; that its rapid and deep decline is the more difficult to be stopped, in proportion to the impetus it has taken, and to the increased energy acquired by that of rival nations ; and that our finances will be irretrievably overthrown, their resources exhausted, and bankruptcy inevitable. Tell him that they who profess other maxims can only be enemies of the state \* \* \* \*

Tell him that the citizen who dares thus to speak in his own avowed name, ought to command some attention to the denunciation which he places at the foot of the throne ; for he cannot derive courage to do this, but from a sense of great and pressing danger.”

We must now notice a writing, published a month subsequently to the “ Denunciation of Stock-jobbing,” and bearing the following title : “ First Letter from the Count of Mirabeau, on M. Necker’s administration, in reply to M. de Lacretelle \*.”

Mirabeau, in this work, returns to the principles he had before laid down, and attacks M. Necker still more directly, imputing to him “the system of loans without mortgage, which is evidently the origin of the revival of stock-jobbing ; the introduction to the Stock Exchange at Paris of Genevese, that fatal seed of stock-jobbers ; and the admission of bankers among the Directors of the *Caisse d’Escompte*.”

He further reproaches Necker with having written and manœuvred against Turgot, and “overthrown by his intrigues the only minister from whom hitherto France could expect regeneration ; with being absolutely ignorant of the principles of taxation, public credit, and loans—those he has effected, being the

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\* March 19th 1787, Paris, 8vo, eight pages. Lacretelle the elder (Pierre Louis) was born in 1751, and died in 1824.

dearest, the worst arranged, and the most ruinous that France has ever been compelled to pay." Lastly, to explain the violence of Mirabeau's language, this work contains, among others, the following sentence, which subsequent events have rendered remarkable, and which seems an anticipated justification of his parliamentary tactics.

"Can this country be regenerated or even reformed, if we do not attack persons as vehemently as we attack things?"

The "Denunciation of Stock-jobbing," made a strong impression upon the public mind. We learn this from Mirabeau himself.

"You will be pleased with the fine collection of letters which my work has brought me, both from the Notables, and from citizens of all classes. The King said: 'When the Count of Mirabeau serves the government, it must fain be with the same character of independence that he has always professed. All his observations are not, however, irreprehensible, because he is a man, and not a god. But after all, he has rendered us a great service \*.'"

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Madame de Nehra, dated March 17th 1787. "This book has obtained prodigious success, a success beyond example, which, as a work, it was far from deserving, but which it perhaps deserved, as a service rendered with courage and dignity. The Notables, for the most part, the chiefs of public bodies,

Mirabeau again alludes to the subject in a subsequent letter.

“ I tell you that all eyes are fixed upon me, because I have published a ‘ Denunciation of Stock-jobbing to the King and the Assembly of Notables,’ which the good citizens expected with great impatience, the bad with great terror. In it I have pursued my subject without respect of things or persons . . . . You have no idea of the effect of this work, and I think it very possible that this effect will reach even the footstool of the sanctuary. Let what will happen, I am convinced that it was impossible to have rendered my country a greater service. One of my friends said to me, the other day: ‘ It is thus a man wins great respect ; but it is thus also that he keeps himself out of every thing.’ To which I replied, ‘ Is great respect nothing ? ’ But this person is wrong according to his own meaning. The truth is, that he was completely seduced by the patron of stock-jobbing, who would himself have weakened my work in its most important results if, fortunately for the country, he had not taken off his mask, which, adding to my views for the public good a wish to show a certain person that if I was good to be taken, I was not also good to be left, assisted me not a little in my developments.

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and honest men of all classes, have congratulated and thanked me. From the notary’s office to the boudoir, I have been read and praised.”  
*Letters to Maquillon*, p. 203.

“ The Notables behaved admirably. Men are always honest the first time they are assembled ; they also evince energy and wisdom, extent of knowledge and foresight. This period will remain, for the King’s glory and the good of the nation. Meanwhile, the *pasquinades* run their course. In one, the wife of a mayor appears at Versailles in a gown of flowered silk ; an exquisite raises the gown, kisses it, and says : ‘ Pardon me, Madam ; but I adore antiquities ! ’ ‘ Ah ! Sir,’ is the reply, ‘ then why did you not say so at once ?—I am twenty years older than my gown.’ Another, is a print representing a farmer, who, on his return from seeing the Assembly of Notables, convokes the tenants of his poultry-yard, and thus addresses them : ‘ My dear animals, I have assembled you in order that you may deliberate upon what sauce I shall have you served up in.’ Whereupon a cock replies : ‘ We will not be eaten at all.’ ‘ You are wandering from the question,’ says the farmer, . . . It is a strange nation that which cannot receive either good or evil but with laughter ! \* ”

It is well known that notwithstanding what was true in Mirabeau’s pamphlet, and what was praiseworthy in his display of courage and patriotism, the “ Denunciation of Stock-jobbing ” displeased the government †,

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Madame de Nehra, dated March 19th 1787,

† The work was suppressed by a decree in council, dated May 17th 1787.



and the author was persecuted. Mirabeau wrote on the subject to Madame de Nehra in the following terms :—

“ DEAR YET-LIE,

“ You must have received, from several quarters, by the courier who left on the 25th, many causes for alarm. It is so incredible that I should have been left quiet fourteen days to be stricken the fifteenth, that you could not have expected this ; but my success was too great to be overlooked. On the 20th an order from the King enjoined the Abbé d’Espagnac and Barraud \* to leave Paris, and I received three letters, informing me that I should be arrested the same evening †. I was firmly resolved to make head against the storm ; but when I knew that the order was not for the Bastille, but for an old remote provincial fortress, where I should have been both lost to the public cause and forgotten in my personal cause, I yielded to the instances of my friends, especially those of the excellent Abbé de Perigord, who had returned from Versailles and exorcised me during five successive hours, to drive me away ‡.

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\* Celebrated stockjobbers.

† In the “ Letters to Mauvillon,” p. 223, is this passage of a letter from M. de Calonne to Mirabeau :—

“ It was not I who advised the order of which you complain. The Abbé de Perigord and Dupont told me, on Sunday March 18th, that they were going to give you notice *as from me*. I laughed, and replied ‘ very well ! ’ ”

Mirabeau adds : “ The fact is true, and paints the man.”

‡ “ My friends insisted upon my departure ; I long hesitated, and

I expect, then, dearest Yet-lie, that on receiving this letter, you will set off like lightning, by the road leading to Aix-la-Chapelle and Liège. I shall be at Tongres, which is at a very short distance from the latter place. You will inquire for Messrs. de Witry d'Everlange, canons, and you will soon behold your best friend. This time of trial will not be of long duration. If it were, you would, with your usual kindness, go to Paris, and settle my affairs.

“ The Count d'Entraignes and Luchet must have written to you, at the same time Jeanneret did, a letter, half alarming, half consolatory, containing a request to set out as soon as possible. Pray do not be uneasy ; for, besides that I am in safety, there is nothing in all this but what is infinitely honourable to me, since the

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should not have yielded had the Bastille been my destination ; but I was to have been sent to a strong castle, in a distant province, where I should have been lost to the public cause, and forgotten in all that relates to myself personally. I therefore set out, determined to let the storm blow over. The time taken to form it sufficiently shows it to be the result of an intrigue which other intrigues will sufficiently oppose ; for I must tell you, that two-thirds and a half, of the ministers, are in my favour.”—*Letters to Mauvillon*, p. 204.

Our quotations show that Mirabeau told the truth : the order was not executed ; here is the proof of it.

“ March 18th 1787 ; the Register of orders bears that this order was not executed, although it had been signed and forwarded to M. de Crosne, then Lieutenant of Police.”—*Peuchet*, vol. iii. p. 103.

We must add, M. Peuchet was Archivist to the Prefecture de Police.

government has been obliged to perform an act of justice upon those I denounced \*. And if, after all, they think proper to punish me for censuring too openly, in my book, certain decrees in council, does this detract from the glory of having rendered such a service to the nation?—and because a minister, against whom every public body in the state is rising, feels himself offended, think you that my case is any the worse? Let short-sighted persons say and believe this \*.”

We borrow some further particulars from Madame de Nehra, who had remained at Berlin.

“ I was uneasy, in consequence of some vague expressions in one of Mirabeau’s letters ; and I received one from M. Panchaud, announcing the catastrophe. Amid the praises given to the ‘ Denunciation of Stock-jobbing,’ a seventeenth *Lettre de Cachet* was

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\* Mirabeau, however, pointed out, with very natural bitterness, the absurd inconsistency of punishing, at the same time and in the same manner, both the principal stock-jobbers and him who had denounced them.

“ And it is on account of this book that I am punished ! And this happens to me the same day, and with greater severity, than the wretches I denounced, whose robberies have desolated the kingdom for the last three years,—robberies attested by the King himself, who has banished them from Paris !—Complete, my friend, your study of men and Kings, in which you have already made such progress ; but do not pity me, for this will pass away,—and if it did not, I should be already consoled.”—*Letters to Mauvillon*, p. 206.

\* Unpublished letter, already quoted, from Mirabeau to Madame de Nehra, dated March 23rd 1787.

issued against the author, who, being warned in time, and probably with the consent of the government, fled to Tongres, whither he entreated me to join him as soon as possible. I arrived at Tongres in the beginning of April, and did not find Mirabeau there. Some patriots of Liège had gone thither for him, and conducted him to their own city, where they entreated him to pass the time of his exile, and where he was sumptuously entertained. At Tongres I found a note from Mirabeau, making known to me the impending disgrace of M. de Calonne, and pressing me to join him at Liège forthwith."

During his short residence at Liège, Mirabeau wrote his "Second Letter on M. Necker's Administration." He now attacked the minister in a more direct and pressing manner, without at all concealing his object, that of preventing the Genevese financier from returning to office.

"If the Colossus of his reputation," observes Mirabeau, "appears to me waiting only for a stalworth arm to reduce it to a very ordinary statue, his financial talents which are the least questioned part of his glory, may from this very day be reduced to their just standard."

On the occasion of the pamphlet published by M. Necker to refute the financial statement presented to the Notables by M. de Calonne, Mirabeau reproaches the Genevese banker with tending to the overthrow of

the latter, as formerly Necker's book on the Corn Laws contributed to the dismissal of Turgot. Speaking of the voluntary errors attributed to M. de Calonne, Mirabeau maintains that a man cannot make a mistake, nor wish to lead others into a mistake of three hundred millions, in an addition so simple as that of the amount of public loans, notoriously effected in ten years. Is it not clear that M. de Calonne, and M. Necker do not agree as to the nature of the items which ought to form this sum; that there is a different enunciation, but neither fraud nor concealment on the part of M. de Calonne; that, in a word, they do not call the same things by the same names?"

Mirabeau, recurring to M. Necker's loans says: "I am at a loss to understand how he could make up his mind to speak, in his pamphlet, of the art with which he met the contingencies of the war without imposing taxes. This fatal act having served, at the same time, to obtain for him the stupid admiration of ignorant people, and to expose to the well-informed the culpable craftiness to which his vanity led him, it was time for him, on pain of being completely unmasked, to make up his mind clearly to refute my objections, or to stand condemned upon his principles. To prove to the public creditors that their interests were in no peril, it was necessary to shelter those of the people. To show that those of the people were respected, he must prove against me that wars without taxes are less

burthensome to the nation; that the borrowing of fresh capital to pay off arrears of interest, is a wise species of economy; and that delaying to impose taxes is diminishing them. \* \* \* \* \* But I say that which you impute to him as a merit constitutes his disgrace; that what you consider a benefit, is an aggravation of your evils. To borrow without imposing taxes, is giving up the county to usurers, who alone lend without security; it is deceiving a whole nation regarding their real situation; it is intoxicating governments, by presenting as easy those projects of destruction and expense that desolate mankind; it is throwing upon future generations the weight of the iniquities of a minister who looks only to his personal fame, and his present success. Credulous people?—hasten ye to admire him, for he will be cursed by your children!”

Mirabeau next defends himself against the imputation of having imprudently spread alarm, at the risk of endangering the public credit.

“I did not say that the state was insolvent, or could ever become so. In economy and its natural resources, there is and always will be enough to give security for necessary loans. I only maintained that a public loan has no other security than that which arises from taxation. These two scourges must always go hand in hand.”

M. Necker had but feebly defended the principal question to which Mirabeau constantly reverted.

"I ask the attentive reader," says Mirabeau, "I ask those who know how to avoid the vertigo of the day, and the delirium of sectaries, and who still admit that they can love God, the State, and the King, without worshipping M. Necker, whether this gentleman has not evidently eluded the contest?—whether he does not, as clearly as possible, admit condemnation on the theory of loan without taxes,—unless his character and virtue \* still remain proof sufficient of his theory after having been the proof of his calculations. Such were the founders of sects: they proved their mission by their miracles, and their miracles by their mission."

Mirabeau sets forth by arguments, by calculations and by comparative tables, that M. Necker's loans might have been effected on terms much less burthensome to the state. After some able developments, but written with unpardonable violence, with a tone of personal hatred, and with furious rage, he protests against the probability of M. Necker's return to office.

"The King," he says, "who is the guardian of his people's honour, will never sanction a foreigner being placed at the helm of state, as essentially necessary to the public credit, as the only man able to administer our finances. What on earth has this foreigner done,

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\* In the simplicity of his pride, M. Necker wrote: "Ah! (I ought to be allowed to say it) the best proof of the truth of the account of 1781, is the character of him who wrote it!"

that twenty millions of Frenchmen should prostrate themselves round his chariot? He has not given a single proof of real talent!—his loans have been dear and ill-combined!—the efforts to which the people are now called, are due, in great part, to the faults of his administration! And this man is to wield the destinies of France!—and we are to be made believe that the Assembly of Notables desire it should be so, and call for his return to office! \* \* \* \* \*

“ No!—an Assembly, which France would not disavow to represent her, will not deserve such cruel reproaches! These worthy citizens feel their power and their duties; they know what value to set upon the resources which order, economy, reform, the virtuous intentions of the King, his generous example, his courageous resolution, and the incalculable riches of the country afford all the servants of the government. That France, so lauded by M. Necker himself, has certainly not become unfruitful since the Genevese banker has ceased to govern it. And what is there alarming in our situation? We know our engagements better, no doubt, but we also know our resources. They are such, that this debt, at which people would alarm us, can no longer surprise any but the narrow-minded or the evil-intentioned. The sinking fund, restored to its natural activity, and replaced under the wise regulations originally framed for it, would lead us to a liquidation, slow, it is true,



but certain, and which would not be hastened by M. Necker, who has dared to decry it, because it was invented by another. What more is required? This sole declaration—that the King’s subjects ought to, will, and can pay all public engagements whatever; that they will face these engagements from devotedness to him and his august dynasty, from a due sense of his confidence, and from respect for the national faith. . . . Such a declaration, which all good citizens expect from the Assembly of Notables, will open all the sources of credit, confidence, zeal, and affection; and it is not from an ambitious foreigner that we shall have to learn either to direct the wealth with which nature has overloaded us, nor the rules of political economy taught by the sages of Europe, nor those properly termed, of finance, (the English, who are the most calculating people in the universe, have just copied the sinking fund established in France,) nor the example of the most unlimited attachment to those principles of honour, on which, in all ages, we have given lessons to nations.”

However vexed the government might have been \* at the time, it could not long remain irritated at views so patriotic, principles of finance so judicious, and obser-

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\* This letter on Necker’s administration, and that in reply to Lacrosette, were both suppressed by a decree in Council, dated June 6th 1787.

vations so just, that, if we mistake not, they are now more striking than ever, even after half a century has elapsed of political and financial vicissitudes.

Thus, we find in Madame de Nehra's Memoirs, that Mirabeau's exile was but of short duration.

“ I did not read his work on stock-jobbing till I was at Liège. I could not help blaming some exaggerated expressions, and some personalities which appeared to me too thoughtlessly advanced, But the period of misfortune is not one for finding fault, so I had not the courage to say much to him. We concerted together means to get this *lettre de cachet* cancelled, as it was an inconvenient thing to be hanging over us. A woman is always the surest and most active of friends : Mirabeau was convinced of this truth, and always trusted to me on awkward occasions. It was therefore decided that I should hasten to Paris, stimulate the zeal of his friends, and again harass the minister \*.”

Here follow some domestic details, which we think interesting, and which are certainly characteristic of Mirabeau. We therefore transcribe them.

“ I have already said that he was careless in money matters, but it is incredible to what extent he neglected his pecuniary affairs. After talking to him about the dangers he had run, I wished to ask him some questions concerning his dispute with his father,

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\* Unpublished Memoirs of Madame de Nehra.

whom nothing on earth could induce him to sue before the courts of justice, but to whom he applied in vain for payment of the pension settled on him.

“ ‘ Yes, à-propos,’ said he, ‘ I wanted to ask you how far I have got on in this business ? ’

“ ‘ What can I know of it,’ I replied, ‘ at a distance of three hundred leagues from Paris? Your journey thither was undertaken partly to settle the matter. You must have seen M. Treilhard \* and M. Gérard de Mesley, and you ask me——’

“ ‘ I!’ said he, interrupting me. ‘ No, truly. I scarcely saw Vignon † for a moment. I had something else to do than attend to all these trifles. Do you know what a crisis we are in?—do you know that horrible stock-jobbing is at a climax?—do you know we have reached a period when there is not perhaps a crown left in the public treasury? ’

“ I smiled at seeing a man whose purse was so ill lined, think so little about it, and yet feel so afflicted at the public distress, without caring about his own private distress. He perceived it.

“ ‘ Well, well, my friend,’ said he, ‘ you are here at

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\* Treilhard (Jean Baptiste), then an advocate, afterwards member of the Constituent Assembly, of the Convention, of the Council of Five Hundred, of the Court of Cassation, of the Executive Directory, of the Imperial State Council, of the Senate, &c. &c. He was born in 1742, and died in 1810.

† Procurator in the Parliament of Paris, and trustee in the interdict laid upon Mirabeau.

last ; settle it all as you please. I approve beforehand of all you may do. These matters are now in your hands, and I have nothing more to do with them.'

" When I was going to set out, it was another farce. Mirabeau took it into his head to accompany me. In vain did I oppose his resolution : not having seen me before for three months, he could not make up his mind to quit me, and he promised me all the prudence I should demand ; but I well knew that it was impossible for him to keep his promise. He did not, however, enter Paris immediately, but remained at St. Denis, where he had appointed some friends to meet him. I proceeded to the hotel de Gênes, whence I wrote to the Baron de Breteuil, to begin my solicitations. I thought I should have had five or six days to concert measures ; but Mirabeau, tired of staying at St. Denis, arrived unexpectedly at the hotel. I was ready to die of fright ; in vain did I take precautions—by his imprudence he rendered them useless. Panchaud's servants said in the ante-chamber, to my maid—

" 'It is of no use your saying that the Count of Mirabeau is at Liège; we know his voice too well ; there—he is speaking now ; nobody else talks with such vehemence.'

" This was reported to me, and I was in an agony of fear. I did not cease employing all my friends. The Baron de Breteuil had told me that the King was

very angry; I also knew what a number of enemies Mirabeau had, and my fear was well founded. I at length made up my mind to confide to the Baron de Breteuil the secret of Mirabeau's arrival at the hotel, and I threw myself upon his generosity. I must admit that he did not betray my confidence. The *lettre de cachet* was not cancelled; but it was not carried into execution. Mirabeau appeared everywhere, and the ministers shut their eyes \*."

Mirabeau remained but a short time at Paris. On the 24th of May 1787, he set out on a third journey to Prussia, in order to complete his great work. In a letter he wrote on the road, we find an affecting passage, in which he expresses a wish never to be realised, and the accomplishment of which his moral temperament, perhaps, as well as his destiny, rendered impossible.

" DEAR YET-LIE,

" In crossing the beautiful country near Strasburg, and looking from Saverne upon the enchanted landscape discovered from this magnificent point of view on both banks of the Rhine, I felt that if the devil wished to tempt me, he would take care not to place me upon a high mountain. Ambition here left my heart,

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\* Unpublished memoirs of Madame de Nehra.

and I said to myself: ‘Ah! how happy should I be, disabused of men and things, to cultivate my garden here, and to live only for my friend and my son \*!’”

Mirabeau remained three months at Brunswick, whither he went, to seek assistance from Major Mauvillon†, who, from his office, and indefatigable study and research, possessed most of the information which Mirabeau had originally required to give to the French government, on the constitution and military administration of Prussia. Though there was no secret in either, for the Prussian authorities concealed nothing, still correct information concerning them could be obtained nowhere but in Prussia.

These communications from Mauvillon are very

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Madame de Nehra, dated June 1st 1787. .

† James Mauvillon, born in 1743, was Major of Engineers, and Professor at Brunswick. He translated Mirabeau’s “Prussian Monarchy” into German; also the following French works:—“Madame de Sevigné’s Letters,” the “Philosophical History of the Two Indies,” by the Abbé Raynal, Turgot’s “Dissertation on Riches,” and Malouet’s “Letters on the French Revolution.” He translated into French “The History of the Seven Years’ War,” by Tempelhoff. He also wrote several original works: “Essay on the Influence of Gunpowder in the Art of Modern Warfare,” “Introduction to all the Military Sciences,” “Historical Essay on the Art of War, during the Thirty Years’ War,” “Biography of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick,” &c. This able, learned, and laborious man, whose merit and literary works did not, however, preserve him from poverty, died at Brunswick, January 10th 1794.

publicly known, for Mirabeau stated them at the beginning of the work of which they form the materials. They are also stated at great length in a collection of letters from Mirabeau to Mauvillon, published forty years ago, and containing five hundred pages of letter-press. Some people have inferred from this that Mauvillon was really the author of the "Prussian Monarchy;" that Mirabeau having purchased with money the labour of another, and that his own share of the work had been limited to the composition of some preambles, and recapitulations; mere show-pieces, more or less stamped with his energetic touch.

We shall make no great effort to refute such an assertion; for it has already been explained away by a person much better informed than ourselves, and much more entitled to belief—that is to say, by Major Mauvillon himself. To refute a contrary error, and show the injustice of some of his countrymen, who denied him the really immense share he had taken in Mirabeau's work, the Major published, in 1794, a hundred letters which Mirabeau had written to him on this subject between August 12th 1786, and October 18th 1790.

Mauvillon thus expresses himself on the subject—

"One of the strongest passions of the Count's friend \*, is being useful to the human species. He had

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\* Mauvillon himself.

already attempted to satisfy this passion by the production of several works, and more especially by a development of some of the great truths of political economy. But whether from mediocrity of talent, from want of authority, or from awkwardness or misfortune, all he wrote on the subject had caused but little sensation. Under these circumstances, a celebrated writer encouraged him to reproduce these things, adding to them a number of new matters, supported by facts known, admitted, and recorded in a thousand works. He undertook to adorn them with the magic of his style, to support them with the authority of his name, and to publish them in the language the most diffused throughout Europe. May he perish who would here reproach the Count of Mirabeau with not having written 'The Prussian Monarchy!' The mother conceives the imperceptible germ by an instantaneous act; from this moment she does every thing for this germ, even to its full development. Still she can produce nothing without this germ—everybody says that the father procreated the child, which even bears his name, and not that of the mother.

“Such is the history of 'The Prussian Monarchy.' The germ came solely from the Count's brain; it is the pure fruit of his genius. He threw it into the soul of his friend, who would never have thought of it alone, nor, in fact, ever have been able to produce such a work. The Count did more. After his friend had



fed, extended, and brought this germ into the world, like a true father, he took care of its education, reset some healthy but dislocated members, removed some wens, effaced some unpleasant stains, and clothed it in garments calculated to make it cut an advantageous figure in the world \*."

Having thus freely transcribed the above declaration from a book entirely unknown in France, because it has scarcely reached that country, and had it done so, a few eloquent passages would have been passed over without observation, buried as they are under four hundred pages of uninteresting details ;—having thus given the testimony of the respectable Major, we need go no further into the question. It would be easy for us to prove, by the very letters published by Mauvillon, that he still very much underrates the labour of revision, recasting, and additional elaboration which Mirabeau really performed ; but no one refuses to the latter the honour of the plan, the principal contexture, and the philosophical and political generalities which bear his imprint, and form the real merit of the work. With regard to the remainder, that is to say, the researches, translations, extracts, recapitulations—in a word, the information of every description supplied to Mirabeau by Major Mauvillon, whose knowledge and genius are too little known, we wish the fact were un-

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\* Letters to Mauvillon, pp. 15 and 16.

known, that we might be the first to mention it, and thereby do honour to his memory, certain as we are that it would not injure that of Mirabeau. We shall only add, that the circumstance of such joint labour is easy to be understood, as assuredly the materials of state papers, transformed afterwards into a statistical work, had nothing of what constitutes an original creation, but really formed a labour of mere compilation and elaboration.

We think, however, that no doubt can exist on the question, after a perusal of the following extract from a letter which Mirabeau wrote, August 22nd 1787, to Madame de Nehra, the confidante of his most secret thoughts, the witness of his labours, and the last person in the world before whom he would or could have attributed to himself the work of another.

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,

“ When this work appears I shall be about eight-and-thirty years of age. I dare to predict that it will raise me a name \*. May-be it will cause my country some regret that such an observer should be left un-

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\* “ No idea can be formed how greatly this production raised, I do not say the author, but the man, in the public opinion ;—thus, no one was surprised at the lead he afterwards took in France.”—*Memoirs of Fauche-Borel*. Paris : Moutardier, 1829. 4 vols. 8vo. Vol. i. p. 52. The reader, if he follows our narrative, will not be surprised at our quoting the obscure memoirs of Fauche-Borel, of which we shall soon have to speak.

employed, and that such a work should be ill rewarded. But it cannot happen that elsewhere a wish to obtain his services will not be felt ; and the proposals I should have, or have perhaps already refused, or at least eluded, I should now accept the moment it became evident to me that my country rejected my services."

After such explanations, it is not necessary for us to say that, whatever elements or materials were obtained from Major Mauvillon, and from other individuals, as well as from public archives, the system adopted, the composition as a whole, and even the writing of the " Prussian Monarchy," were entirely the work of Mirabeau. Besides the enormous mass of documents entirely in Mauvillon's handwriting, we have two manuscripts of this work. The first, containing more than half, is in Mirabeau's hand, and bears the stamp of assiduous and troublesome, though rapid labour. The second manuscript is in a strange hand, but with numerous autograph corrections by Mirabeau ; and this evidently was the copy sent to the printer.

We have anticipated our narrative a little in order to enable the reader to pass judgment upon the imputations of plagiarism cast upon Mirabeau, with regard to this work. We shall now retrograde for an instant, and state some circumstances connected with his stay at Brunswick to complete his " Prussian Monarchy."

Whilst occupied with this great undertaking, he did not neglect some other works necessary to his domestic wants, not less than to the activity of his mind, for which he had now no hope of finding employment in a public career. Events had not yet opened this career to him, and he was then kept from it by indifference, uneasiness, or aversion on the part of the government. He wrote from Brunswick as follows:—

“ If my friends, or those calling themselves so, serve me well, after the appearance of my work on the Prussian Monarchy, it will be easy to convince the government of the extreme utility of publishing a similar work on England\* and France. With 30,000 francs, for instance, I could produce in two or three years, a work of the same kind upon England, with this great difference, that the results would contain still greater variety, and be more important in themselves; and having on the one hand more labour,

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\* “ Such a work on England would have been a thousand times easier, more brilliant, and more sought after; but it was on this very account that, without renouncing this excellent project, I thought it my duty to begin with what was within the reach of fewer Frenchmen, on account of their want of acquaintance with the German language, and our trifling knowledge of Germany, compared with that propagated by public instruction and discussion, in a country where there are no mysteries nor secrets, nor even absolute ignorance.”—*Introduction to the Prussian Monarchy*, vol. i. p. 13 of the 4to edition.

In his letters to Mauvillon, Mirabeau often alludes to this project of writing upon England.

I should on the other find greater facility. This great work, which, for fame only, I would undertake on my own account, if I were in possession of the fortune that will one day be mine, would be of unquestionable use to general instruction, and perhaps it may one day be known that instruction is a resource in finances \*."

Mirabeau, though dissatisfied with the ministers, was at this time devoting his mind to the political interests of his own country.

"The Duke† informed me yesterday that we are going to send twelve thousand men to Givet under the command of M. de Rochambeau. Have we at length come to a determination with regard to your country?‡" I write by this post to the Abbé de Perigord, who, I beg, will inform either M. de Montmorin or the Archbishop§ that the Duke of Brunswick set out this night to take the command, as field-marshal, of the Prussian army now assembling in Westphalia; that I do not make this communication for mere pleasure, the government having taken good care to prevent me from feeling any interest in its administration and its glory, but that I may not be accused of indecently and dis-

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Madame de Nehra, dated July 13th 1787.

† Of Brunswick.

‡ Letter above quoted, dated July 13th 1787.

§ M. de Brienne, former minister, afterwards Archbishop of Sens, and a Cardinal.

loyally remaining in an enemy's country, or nearly so. I have added, that if they find fault with my remaining here until the beginning of September, the probable period of the completion of my work, I hope that the Abbé, in his friendship, will let me know it. Apply on the same subject, I beg of you, to the Baron of Breteuil, either in writing or *vivâ voce*, in order that I may be right on all sides, and that if the Abbé should be absent, my precautions may be taken equally well\*.

“ The Duke is continuing his march, which he had suspended for a short time, in consequence of news of the death of the Elector Palatine given in all the public papers, but of which there is yet no authentic confirmation. He is now going to take for good, the command of the army of Westphalia, where I consider him rather an armed mediator than an avowed enemy. Once more, my situation is becoming delicate; and although what I am doing here is well known, and I work day and night with extreme diligence, I do not think I shall have finished before the 15th of September. This is a long time to be away from you, in a country where I am loaded with kindness and respect, but where, nevertheless, I cannot but be suspected the moment the interests of the country become diametrically opposed to those of France”†.

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Madame de Nehra, dated July 29th 1787.

† Unpublished letter from the same to the same, dated July 30th 1787.

A circumstance occurred at this period, at which Mirabeau was much affected. No man was more devoted to friendship, or more capable of gratitude. He was very intimate, as we have already stated, with Panchaud the banker, to whom he was under obligations. Panchaud was dismissed from an important appointment in the finance department; Mirabeau felt this severely, and wrote on the subject as follows:

“ You inform me, my dear friend, of Panchaud’s dismissal. I am shocked and grieved at this. What! —in the crisis under which they are now striving, at a time when all possible skill will be perhaps insufficient to conciliate internal embarrassments with external dignity, they dismiss the only man who can make the hen lay her golden eggs without ripping her open! He who has brought from five to six millions into the public treasury, and founded the *Caiss ed’Ameortissement*, and the sinking fund, is dismissed at fifty years of age; and they who have dismissed him do not think that they have committed an iniquitous and barbarous action! This is inconceivable, and if it afflicts me with grief, it overcomes me with rage. Thus, then, is this poor man cast into the abyss dug by his own services, by the very benefits he has conferred. . . . My friend, you guess all I would say. . . . It would be imprudent to let my heart pour forth all its feelings; but it is almost broken—for, during my life, it has received few shocks more severe than this. I know not even whether I ought to write or not to the unfor-

fortunate man. If the marks of sensibility which I might evince did not aggravate his situation—for how must they hate him for all the evil they have inflicted upon him—provided he resists the counter blow, events will avenge him sufficiently; but may the reparation not be too slow for his dreadful situation\*.

Mirabeau went on with his work.

“I persevere and hasten on, without departing from the most scrupulous fidelity, and I am beginning to see land; but the amusements of the court†, where I am made too much of, delay me a good deal, and these amusements occur almost every day at this period, when there are so many strangers here‡.”

At the end of August, Mirabeau was sufficiently near the conclusion of this task to dispose of his work.

“I begin with good news, my dear Yet-Lie; I have closed with Fauche for 20,000 francs. We have, however, kept open till October 20th, the faculty of breaking off the bargain; but this is more especially because he requires the ratification of a man who is his security. I am to fix upon the paper, the type, and the form. He begs I will see the work through the press, and I have asked to be allowed till the end of Septem-

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Madame de Nehra, dated August 2nd 1787.

† The court of the Duchess of Brunswick.

‡ Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Madame de Nehra, dated August 6th 1787.



ber to determine upon this, as well as upon the agreement of sale. The only object of this clause is to ascertain whether you can make up your mind to come and spend a few months at Hamburgh. Another equally important point remains to be settled. I have the greatest wish to show my work to my friends, and especially to Panchaud, and to the Abbé de Perigord whose eagle eye is infinitely necessary to its perfection. I do not, however, know in what situation I stand with your fickle and fantastic administration; and there is no occasion for me to risk any thing by returning to France. Lose not an instant in replying to me, for I am only waiting for your answer to embark for Hamburgh. I cannot, however, believe that the gates of France are closed against me; for why should they be? And why should they not? Ask M. de Breteuil yourself, and get M. de Malesherbes to ask the Archbishop of Toulouse, whether there is any danger in my returning\*.

“Fauche wished to place my portrait at the beginning of the work. I sent his ugly wish to the deuse, and advised him to substitute that of Fredrick II— which he will do†.

“I am making as much haste as I can, because the

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Madame de Nehra, dated August 20th 1787.

† Unpublished letter from the same to the same, dated August 22nd 1787.

political horizon is becoming so dark that I much fear circumstances will soon deprive me of Major Mauvillon. A great convoy of artillery passes tomorrow through Pymont on its way to the frontiers of Holland. Will the King of Prussia become a party? Will he seize this opportunity to claim Guelderland, or will he remain only an armed spectator of what the 50,000 men are going to do, whom the Emperor is sending into the Austrian Netherlands? These, as you may well suppose, are questions which I am unable to answer. What is certain is, that Field Marshal the Duke of Brunswick seems perfectly quiet here. But it is the lion's sleep! Poor Netherlands!—how many bloody executions are about to take place there! How is it that they have carried matters to such lengths, if they had no means of supporting their resolution? And why do they spoil so good a cause by showing at least as much effervescence in favour of religious brotherhoods and pilgrimages, as for the most sacred of their political privileges? Be all these matters as they may, a very honourable thing has occurred to me: the King, knowing that I was writing a work on Prussia, sent me permission through the Duke, to examine all the papers of L. . . . . This shows that they are not afraid that the truth should be published, and that they are not without esteem for the publisher\*.”

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Madame de Nehra, dated

Although this great work was finished August 1787, it was not published till a year later. It is,

August 25th 1787. If the reader bear in mind that this is a strictly confidential letter, written to a woman who was Mirabeau's most intimate friend, he will be struck with the thoughtlessness of several of Mirabeau's biographers—with that, for instance, of P. Chaussard, one of Mirabeau's most enthusiastic admirers. This is what he states concerning the "Prussian Monarchy."

"Successfully employing the secrets of that *science* politely termed politics, he corrupted clerks, obtained rare documents and despatches, sacrificed with judgment subalterns,—all hateful, but certain means—and gave the French Government most important information, of which it took no advantage."—*P. 50 of "Summary of the Life" placed at the beginning of the "Esprit de Mirabeau."*

This is a black calumny invented by the writer; and if before Chaussard published it, he had taken the trouble to read the correspondence from Berlin, he would have known that Mirabeau had not the least difficulty in procuring purely statistical information, because, in Prussia and throughout Germany, such information may be obtained by any person desirous of satisfying his curiosity.

In the ensuing page, the same writer states that Mirabeau was compelled to quit Berlin at twenty-four hours' notice. This fact, invented by Chaussard, and embellished with a scandalous story to which we shall presently revert, is just as true as the former; yet it has been copied by Cadet Gassicourt in his "*Essay on the Private Life, &c.*"—p. 81. of the first edition and 82 of the second. But this latter writer himself proves, without intending it, the untruth of his story, for he says that the cause of Mirabeau's expulsion from Berlin was "his impudence in publishing his book." Now, it is certain, and any one may ascertain the fact, that Mirabeau quitted Berlin only three times—May 10th 1786, January 19th 1787, and August 28th 1787—and the "*Prussian Monarchy*" did not appear till after August 19th 1788. The tale of the pretended expulsion from Berlin is repeated at p. 83. vol. xxx. of the "*Biographie Universelle*."

therefore, in the part of our work corresponding with that period, that we must give an account of "the Prussian Monarchy," otherwise we should violate the chronological order of events.

It is true that, from time to time, we have swerved from this order for reasons derived either from comparisons of works, or from a wish to pursue, without digression or interruption, recitals in which the interest, or if we may so term it, the physiognomy of facts would have been altered by a contrary method.

But here we are induced, by a particular reason, not to interrupt the regular course of events. A great part of the present Book has been devoted to giving an account of the "Denunciation of Stock-jobbing," a pamphlet which formed a very remarkable incident in one of the great events of our history—we allude to the convocation of the Notables. Its consequences, so far as they regard Mirabeau, ought, therefore, to be included in the present division of our narrative. Our analysis of the work shows the known and public share he had in the event; it is now our duty to show him in another capacity, which, although it has remained secret, and unknown up to the present time, is no less honourable, we venture even to say, no less glorious to his memory.

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\* The dedicatory epistle at the beginning of the "Prussian Monarchy," is dated August 19th 1788.

whose administration, joined to other causes, had prepared the catastrophe which that man's dismissal from office was to hasten.

The Archbishop of Toulouse having reached the object of his ambition, was forced to give way, in his turn, to the irresistible force of things. As minister, he had resumed those very plans which he had rejected as the leader of a party—plans which, for thirteen years past, the country would not accept from M. Turgot nor from M. Necker, who were reproached with the stiffness and pride of their virtue; nor from M. de Calonne, who, with much greater reason, was suspected of amiable immorality and brilliant vices.

The first Assembly of the Notables broke up July 27th 1787, and the result of its labours showed, in two contrary senses, the extreme incapacity of the two ministers: he who fell from having assembled them, and he who survived their meeting.

The former had called them together in order to confine within a limited circle a discussion which the general fermentation throughout the nation was rendering too public, and to avoid a convocation of the States-General. But every shade of opinion without, found an echo in the Assembly of Notables; and, although composed of individuals carefully chosen from the privileged orders, patriotism raised its bold voice in the Assembly. Though called together for the mere purpose of receiving limited communi-

cations in silence, and giving inert counsels, the Notables assumed more active duties. They expressed doubts of the reality of the deficit; they demanded, nay, insisted upon, and forcibly obtained the proofs long refused to them; they virtually took a share in the government, and thus opened the road in which the parliament advanced after them, and perished in its turn; but which the National Assembly entered after the parliament, and successfully threaded its intricacies.

The latter minister obtained, it is true, from the Notables, what he wanted, at least to all appearance. They gave their sanction, in part formally, in part tacitly, to the territorial subvention, the increase of the stamp duty, the free trade in corn, the abolition of average labour, and the Provincial Assemblies. The public opinion so strongly sympathised in these concessions, that it would have overcome the parliaments themselves, if the government, taking advantage of so decisive an opportunity, had placed them in a situation either to lose their popularity at once by a refusal, or to sanction measures which, by increasing the revenues of the state, whilst a system of judicious economy was introduced to diminish the expenditure, would have provided for a long time, if not for ever, against the crisis in the finances, and would thereby have put a stop to, or at least have delayed, the threatened revolution.

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fault, by hesitating when he should have acted, by giving the enthusiasts time to become calm—the wavering time for mistrust—the opposition time to get up intrigues—the parliaments time to prepare a fresh resistance. Instead of hastening forward, he temporised without any known reason for doing so. Instead of proceeding amid unanimous applause, taking to the parliament the territorial subvention, which really affected only the privileged orders, all the others being already taxed, the minister grouped this tax with the stamp duties, which was to bear upon the whole nation, and which the recent example of America rendered, to a certain degree, unpopular. As if to effect a fear which he should not have admitted, and to excite a resistance previously impossible but then easy, the minister, in presenting measures to the necessity of which public reason assented, inconsiderately imparted to his acts the hateful forms of despotism. The parliament taking advantage of the opportunity, so injudiciously offered, to conceal selfish private interests under the disguise of the general interest, refused to register the stamp duties, to which it would willingly have consented in lieu of the territorial subvention, the refusal to admit which it did not dare to avow. At the same time, inveighing against abuses, and prodigality, it demanded a convocation of the States-general. An order of exile \* was the reply

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\* August 15th 1787.

of the minister, who, acting in an inverse sense to his own and the King's interests, committed the double mistake of restoring to the parliaments the dangerous influence of which he might have deprived them, that of alienating for their own advantage, the nation whose assistance the minister might so easily have obtained against them.

At once presumptuous and unskilful, ignorant and headstrong, pusillanimous and violent, the prime minister had placed himself at the head of the administration without any energy or real talent; and under the most difficult circumstances he did not appear to have a correct notion of the difficulties before him, nor any fixed plan by which they could be obviated.

We have reason to believe that the Archbishop of Toulouse had an idea of employing Mirabeau, who, however, thought unfavourably of the events that had taken place during his absence.

He had previously written —

“ As I can very well abstain when I command myself to do so, but as even in commanding myself to abstain, I could not change my principles and opinions, I shall turn my views, and devote my labours to another career, as my country is so unworthy of being served in my present \*.”

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\* Letters to Mauvillon, p. 230.

Always irritated at the persecution drawn upon himself by his bold "Denunciation of Stock-jobbing," he had lately written—

" The opposition cry out in my favour as loudly as it is possible to cry out in this country—that is to say, not very loud, but still loud enough for these rumours, combined with my absence, which is more alarming than my presence, to awe that part of the cabinet that holds me in execration, because it could not corrupt me. Advances, therefore, are already being made to me . . . but I must know before anything else, what it is they intend doing. Such, however, is the concomitant of a good conscience, of the love of good seconded by a little talent, and of the public censure passed upon great criminals. I know that barbarous tyrants have destroyed the noble geniuses that noted their crimes; but have they destroyed the glory of these geniuses, and prevented from germinating, and being reproduced, the instruction which they had sown? My friend, civic virtue (which presupposes courage) is the only thing beyond the power of tyranny. Quacks have no power over it; their injustice adds to its glory; virtue aggrandises itself on its ruins, its losses enrich it; its wounds animate its courage; its fall inspires it with fresh vigour; in death it finds life; each century, even in becoming corrupt, places a crown at the foot of its statue \*."

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\* Letters to Mauvillon, p. 209.

We return to the period from which our narrative now proceeds. Mirabeau, on his return to France, wrote as follows :—

“ I am arrived, overcome with fatigue, and I find to comfort me all the horrors of opprobrium and madness, conspiring for the destruction of my country \*.

“ It is impossible for a man who thinks and feels, not to be struck with consternation; and it is not given to human wisdom to guess where all this will end †. ”

Equally mistrustful of the principles, plans, and ultimate success of the minister, Mirabeau maintained a prudent reserve. This is evident, from the following reply to one of the most intimate familiars of the Archbishop of Toulouse.

“ I have received your letter with more gratitude than surprise.

“ However disposed I might have felt to think favourably of you, I earnestly wished, or rather I promised myself, that the most formidable trial to which a man, especially a young man, can be exposed—I mean unexpected prosperity—would keep you modest,

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\* Mirabeau wrote about the same time: “ The Parliament is not exiled; it has only received orders to administer justice at Troyes. This is an absurd horror.” *Letters to Mauvillon*, p. 256.

† *Ibid.* p. 272.

intact, and alive to the recollections of absent and silent friendship.

“ I had, however, sufficiently followed your progress since your return from Germany, to foretel your personal success. I promised myself that you would do much. But it was difficult, you will allow, to foresee the chance which has raised you to a station so near to the most august confidence ; and I did not, therefore, calculate upon your fortune, nor your manner of bearing that fortune.

“ When I heard of it, I was at Hamburgh, where people congratulated themselves upon it, for you are liked there ; but it was not according to my habit to write to you spontaneously on my return. Public affairs seemed to me in so active a crisis, and the sanctuary in which you are, so beset with men and things, that being unable to think I was required there to be useful—as I can, and will be, and not otherwise—I should have found myself importunate there, and out of place. I did not therefore see you. You make it a matter of reproach, which is very kind of you. But allow me, as a first reply, to defy you to repeat this reproach, if ever, which may God avert !—fortune proves inconstant to you.

“ Up to the present time, what would you have me do at Versailles?—I who am proud of my services, of my strength, and of my faults probably, since the follies of an effervescent youth were the

first spur that pressed me to pay a noble and generous tribute to my country! What would you have me do at a place where people believe that they have said every thing concerning me when they exclaim,—‘He has great talents!—what a pity!’—As if the exclamation did not amount to this:—‘He writes excellent things, but what a man would he be if he did not write at all!’ What should I do where I am disparaged for the very thing that does me honour, feared on account of my services, insulted on account of the talents I possess?—where I have been injured, not only in word but in deed, by the man best qualified to appreciate me, to rise above prejudice and idle reports:—by your minister, in a word, who cannot but know that a great reputation is seated only upon great calumnies? What had he to impute to me? Having contributed to overthrow the man upon whose ruin he has raised himself to supreme power!—having professed the principles which, he says, he will convert into laws!—having crushed some of the monsters of which, it is said, he will purge his country!—having shown that the implacable enemy of all authority, of all influence, and of every office but his own, had nothing great but his quackery and his ambition! . . . . . These are, doubtless, very dreadful crimes! . . . . .

“So let them be, my good friend; for I do not

fret about the alarm of those who fear me, any more than I experience uneasiness about the animosity of those who hate me. Assuredly I do not deny that I am attracted, that I am seduced by circumstances which hold out a noble prospect to my country. I feel that it would be too natural and too easy for me to yield myself up wholly to the man who should give a hope that France will be constituted and therefore regenerated. But far from me the thought of offering myself to any but one whose intentions I know and approve of; far from me the imprudence of asking for the confidence of any one to whom I have not yet given mine. I solicit nothing; I covet nothing; I envy nothing. I may have been desirous of employing my activity, sure as I am that I shall serve faithfully, even usefully, by dint of zeal, application, and perseverance, and shall thus give as much as I receive. But I will never meet even half way. They would term intrigue or presumption that which is true love of the public weal, and patriotism as pure in its energy as it is disinterested in its motives.

“ Leave me, then, in my obscurity. I say my obscurity, because, in fact, it is my intention to remain invariably in obscurity, until a regular order of things has sprung from the tumult we are now in, and some great revolution, whether in good or evil, shall command a good citizen, always accountable for his suffrage, and even for his talents, to raise his voice.

This revolution cannot be long delayed. The strait which the public vessel has entered is equally short and dangerous. An able pilot can, no doubt, bring the good ship again into the open ocean, and if she once gets there, she is safe ; but she can only do this with the assistance of the crew, and, at this period, I know of no seaman who ought to be despised.

“ I do not, however, perceive that many good ones are employed at a period when the particular combinations of inventive finance constitute the first of our resources, the most urgent of our wants. I perceive nothing but incapacity and fluctuation in the financial department, uneasiness and penury in the treasury, and mistrust and discredit among the public, on the subject of the loan, without which you cannot live or even scarcely go through the year. This loan will perhaps be effected in a proper manner ; it will certainly be so if the Archbishop frames the plan of it properly. Among persons acquainted with the matter, who does not know that the mode of applying a loan and directing its distribution is more important to its success than even the conditions on which it is effected ? The entire history of our finances proves this. The only one of our loans attended with great success is that, the distribution of which has, I will not say not reached perfection, but approached the proper plan, which is entirely unknown to the old school. I here allude to the loan of a hundred and twenty-five mil-



lions, which led to five hundred millions of subscriptions. Is it at a time when, in truth, all the secrets of the art are not too many, that anything ought to be risked?—that an operation so important is to be left to routine and ignorance? The financial department is surrounded by none but old professors, whose practice, lauded by speculators interested in a continuance of the old system, and who found their wealth upon the discredit of the state, is dishonoured by the very constant languor of our loans. If to such hands the destiny of this our last sacrament is to be confided, truly I foresee the greatest misfortunes; and assuredly they may be as easily proved as predicted. Bear in mind, that in this I have and can have no other interest than the thing itself; and if the warning appears to you important—if the Archbishop, carried away by the torrent of events, has no time to apply his meditation to this particular point, let him ask for the papers written for M. de Calonne, and thereupon ground the distribution of the hundred and twenty-five millions. These writings exist; they contain all, both in theory and in practice; and I defy a man of good faith to reply to them.

“ Be that as it may, my dear friend,—for I know not how I have been led into this digression,—rely upon my personal regard, my devotedness to the public thing, and even the facility which any one who becomes its useful director will find in obtaining my

undivided services. But do not ask me to go and show the face of a solicitor or a courtier\*.”

At the same time, Mirabeau continued to labour actively at the “Prussian Monarchy.” To avoid a journey to Hamburgh in order to see the work through the press, he applied for permission to have it printed in France, writing personally to M. de Montmorin, a minister who had before treated him kindly.

“Do not, I entreat you, refuse me a tacit permission to print my great work, with the occasion and the subject of which you are acquainted, and the usefulness of which you have kindly predicted. You will save me a journey and expense, and you will benefit the French booksellers. On the other hand, I will render myself worthy of this confidence, by exercising myself a severer censorship than any person you could send; and I pledge you my word that in my six volumes, there shall not be a single sentence at which either France or the Emperor can reasonably take offence†.”

There is every reason to believe that this request, which in these times appears so simple, was not granted; for the “Prussian Monarchy,” the publication of which was delayed until August or September 1788, appeared as published in London. M. de Mont-

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to Soufflot, dated Oct. 4th 1787.

† Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to M. de Montmorin, dated October 8th 1787.

morin, however, sent for Mirabeau, who, not having time to give him a proper explanation, wrote him a letter which we here transcribe, and in which, being resolved not to connect himself with the ministerial system, at least so far as regarded the home administration, he offers himself for a mission which ministers would not give him. They pressed him to accept one which he declined, as we shall presently show; and this refusal, unknown to this day, is one of the facts that best establishes and does most honour to Mirabeau's political character, which is still misunderstood after a lapse of fifty years even by some of the most fervent admirers of his genius.

“The arrival of the Baron of Breteuil having deprived me of the honour of conversing with you a sufficient time to describe to you Germany such as I saw it, and such as most observers, by order, will *not* describe it to you,—having, still less, found an opportunity of speaking to you of myself, permit me, in what I intended to say to you, to state at least that part which is personal to myself.

“I was charged, during ten months, to give an account of Berlin and of the Prussian Monarchy. I know not whether the voluminous papers I wrote on this occasion are in your hands; but I suspect not, because M. de Vergennes, who, under the circumstances which induced him to employ me, thought that he could not begin by avowing my official character,

especially employed, in this case, the good offices of M. de Calonne, through whom my deciphered despatches reached his hands, and those of the King. But independently of the ministerial praises bestowed upon me, I affirm and offer to prove that during this period, not a single interesting fact happened that escaped me, or which I did not foretell, and draw a faithful prognostic of men and things.

“ I shall not here recal the price I received for my zeal and my labour. May it ever remain unknown, in order that good citizens may not be discouraged ! But I make bold to tell you that if, in the present perplexed situation of France, and the uncertainty of our vacillating politics, a man who bears a name well enough known for his curiosity in travelling, not to be an object of surprise, should become the medium of a more exact and rapid communication ; if a man, who, by his assiduous application, has perhaps acquired some knowledge and facility, should appear to you likely to be useful, it would be worthy of you not to be stopped by perfidious *on dits*, or frivolous considerations. I have nothing to reply to the former, except that I have always been a faithful servant, a devoted friend, a safe depositary of confidence, and that respectable persons would, if requisite, become security for me. With regard to the latter, be so good as to believe that the same talent which has struggled by the force of opinion against the public authority, is the more able to

save it when it can make him its own by a community of principles, and the tie of benefits conferred. Until the time comes when Providence shall dispose of my father, my existence and fortune can be only my own work, or that of government. Eager to be more and more useful, and to disappoint calumniators and wicked men, by a mode of existence in which I shall force them to do me justice, the executive life suits me better than the speculative, and I should prefer serving the government by acts, to risking its displeasure in my office of instructor. It is not unworthy of you to give the government a useful servant, whom so many of your predecessors have endeavoured to represent as a dangerous subject. There are posts for which you have few men, either because they have no preliminary knowledge, and are unacquainted with the northern languages, or because these places require a strong head, and great intrepidity, or talents of execution, combined with those of the closet—a combination not very common. I am as ready to risk my head as to employ it in the King's service. Warsaw, St. Petersburg, Constantinople, Alexandria, are nearly the same to me, provided I find there a useful employment of my activity. I leave it to your wisdom to determine the manner of my employment, to your equity alone to fix the remuneration. I simply offer my services, and I merely add that, being accustomed to the ingratitude of men, and the injustice of their rulers, I shall only have a stronger

sense of benefits conferred, and feel more grateful to those who confer those benefits \*."

This application was unsuccessful. Mirabeau, who could not be employed in the manner he proposed, and would not render the kind of services demanded of him, hastened by his good wishes and his personal exertions the denouement thenceforward inevitable, in which his profound sagacity saw the regeneration of France, and in which he was certain of finding a career for his patriotism, and employment for his talents. He was connected with several members of the parliament, some hostile, some favourable to the ministers. The following is his reply to one of the latter, who had written to him on the subject of the promise made, in order to obtain further loans, of a convocation of the States-general, in 1792.

"I should like to see you ; first of all, for the sake of seeing you ; next, because your year 1792 runs in my head. It is impossible that this date can inspire good citizens with confidence. If, by the force of things, 1789 is rigorously necessary, as you believe, why not ask for 1789, giving that as a reason? If, in that, the government shows any obstinacy, why not use the word *forthwith*? This word is a thousand times better than a distant date, for which there is no pretence, although assuredly it does not require five

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to M. de Montmorin, dated October 12th 1787.

years either to assemble, or to be formed, or to prepare; and the state of the nation is too critical for those who have brought it to this pass, to be allowed to live sixty months longer by expedients, and to borrow five or six hundred millions to get over a useless interval. A lustre is for this moveable country an entire cycle. The citizens will find real derision in this announcement. Keen observers will see in it a collusion between the government and the parliaments to continue to govern in the absence of the nation. What will become of you then, ye ministers and magistrates? Think you, that a vague preamble will restore credit in a country, when preambles have never been any thing but the jargon of incapacity, or the handles of evil faith?—and that, too, at a time when all contributes to discredit, when money is at an excessive premium, the public debt founded on air, and the mistrust universal—when the nation feels better each day, each hour, and each instant, its own force, and the want the government has of its concurrence? A convocation of the States-general is so strongly commanded by necessity, and so inevitable, that, with or without a prime minister, under Achilles or Thersites, it will undoubtedly take place, and thus the nation will not feel much indebted to ministers for it, whatever be the period indicated. But if the period be distant, it will be a further motive for discontent, discredit, and ill-will.

“ You who, at an age when a man scarcely escapes from the first effervescence of inconsistent youth, may take so noble a share in the revolution which will constitute France, and give it the development of its greatness—do not suffer yourself to be deceived—do not lose your noble stake. Do not, for the sake of personal advantage, endanger a game in which interest and honour are agreed—for the nation will not lose it. The impetus is such, that even those who have given it with bad intentions will no longer be in time to retreat. The age is too far advanced, and the public mind in a state of too great excitement for us to lose anything of what we have gained. As a magistrate, profit by the inconceivable order of things which has rendered France parliamentary ; as a citizen, co-operate with all your might in the great work of the constitution, and do not allow yourself to be turned from it by any illusion, by any subterfuge. As a man, ask of yourself of how many days we are sure, and defend yourself still more against delays than against precipitation ; for at most, the latter could but lead us to a few faults, which would not prevent us from being mature at the period of the revolution which will thus take place ; but the former might cause some dreadful shocks. *Vale, spes altera Romæ* \*.”

L. C. D. M.

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau, dated November 18th 1787. The text, which the reader has just seen, is copied verbatim from an



The political crisis approached nearer and nearer. After the exile of the Parliament to Troyes, the Archbishop of Toulouse passing rapidly from violence to weakness, withdrew the two edicts on the territorial subvention, and the stamp duties ; and on the 10th of December, twenty-five days after the order of exile, he recalled the magistrates with the more eagerness, because they cried out loudly against despotism, and called upon the nation to resist,—and because, on the other hand, depending upon the promises of some, the minister fancied he had attained the point indicated in the above letter : that is to say, he was persuaded that all of them, to obtain their recal, would yield to the proposal of a gradual loan, of four hundred and forty millions, to be realised in four years, and contracted on the condition a convocation of the States-general.

Being consulted by another magistrate, Mirabeau wrote—

“ I have reflected much upon the state of things and upon your personal situation. To this meditation, besides the energy of a soul that lives in the *beau ideal* of the public good, and of a mind long exercised on objects of this nature, I have brought the interest inspired by your talents, your destiny, and your con-

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autograph rough copy, without a superscription, and we are not sufficiently sure of the destination of this letter to offer any conjecture as to the name of the party to whom it was written.

fidence, that irresistible attraction for good hearts. I have considered, under every aspect, the man, yourself, and the thing. My opinion has always been the same. I think I am right, and so long as my nature remains unchanged, I shall continue to think so. The following is the conclusion to which I have come:—

“ It is impossible to support the Archbishop of Toulouse in the plan we know of; to attempt it would be dishonouring yourselves for no good.

“ To register this enormous loan, the legal necessity of which cannot be shown, and which it is impossible you can avoid blaming except by taking as a pretence that you have had no time to examine and judge of it;—to register this loan by an edict that carries with it a tacit registration of three other loans, and offers the nation an unnecessary aggravation of debt of nearly five hundred millions; to register this loan on a mere verbal promise made under an insidious form, to convoke, before the expiration of five years, the States-general, would, under any other circumstances, be a thing, perhaps, impossible to an honest man; but it is in my opinion a proposal very dangerous to every magistrate who not only cannot depend upon the security of a majority, but who, in all human probability, must anticipate a disgraceful minority, which that minister too richly deserves, whose conduct cannot be explained, except by supposing that he intends to seize a pretence for effecting a bankruptcy, and raising the standard of despotism.

In vain will votes be counted. At first, and on ordinary occasions, it is by no means proved that the minister would have even a division; but it would be a very unreasonable presumption, to believe it possible for him to monopolise a majority, at a time when opposition is so much in fashion, and the excitement so general; at a juncture when fear makes people brave, and self-love makes them incendiaries, and which brings matters to such a pass, that even those who are bought, if there be any, will be faithless without perfidy.

“Certainly, war has its dangers; but it has none to be compared, especially for a public man, to a desertion of the public thing. What will the Archbishop do? Will he make the nation a bankrupt? This is not in his power any more than the money itself. Will he fulminate forth proscriptions? Martyrs of every kind are the seed of martyrs; and were even Cardinal Richelieu present, his times would not be present. Will the Archbishop wage war against the nation? If so the business will soon be settled. He has given out his measures; he will step backward and fall to the ground. His fall will produce private evils, for some individuals will be crushed by the ruins; but they who step on one side, will assuredly risk less than those who ventured to advance and prop up the building.

“If you speak, make the moderation of the results pass, by the energy of the details. But however well disposed you may be towards the Archbishop of

Toulouse and peace, you cannot, without destroying your reputation, speak with more indulgence than in the following sense:—‘ Let us leave this loan to the King’s wisdom, for his parliament cannot judge of its necessity—let him, therefore, decide upon it in his wisdom, provided that, by a prudent and paternal convocation of the States-general in 1789, the parliament has the certainty that the loan of a hundred and twenty millions is in reality only provisional, and the only one which it will be called upon to sanction, until the time when the assembled nation shall know its own wants, decree its own duties, exercise its own rights, and unfold its own resources.’

“ It cannot be said that such counsel is incendiary, since it grants the provisional loan on reasonable and moderate conditions. It cannot be said that it is cowardly, as it stipulates on behalf of the nation before the King himself. It is capable of setting talents and wisdom to work. Believe me, do not go beyond the line I have traced, for you would do no one any good, and yourselves a prodigious deal of harm. Time is no longer when a private individual could indemnify a man for the loss of public esteem; and the day is about to dawn when the suffrage of the nation will suffice to make of an able man a very great citizen. *Vale et me ama.* If you wish to see me, I shall be at your orders day and night \*.”

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau, dated November 18th 1787.

This judicious and bold language was not addressed to a solitary magistrate only ; whatever co-operation he expected from this and several others, he had, nevertheless, too much sagacity to found a solid confidence on the collective body of a parliament already brought into disrepute, at least among people of sense, by its frequent vacillation, and by the inconsistencies into which it was led in turn by pride and the want of popularity, selfishness, and a spirit of systematic opposition ; of a parliament, in short, which would promote the public good only on condition that no sacrifice was required of it, and which really possessed no patriotism except in opposition to the King's ministers.

Far, therefore, from placing any dependence upon the parliament, and foreseeing that the public cause would obtain from it nothing but a noisy, precarious, and, at the same time, sterile and dangerous support, Mirabeau applied to the government itself to point out and advise the line of conduct imposed by reason and necessity, prudence and sound policy.

Thus, forgetting the personal reasons he had to complain, and seeing only the actual and coming results of the sitting of November 19th, at which the loan of four hundred and twenty millions was refused, and the King braved to his face by an almost unanimous opposition, at the head of which appeared the Duke of Orleans, Mirabeau wrote the very next day the following letter to M. de Montmorin.

“ The loan is rejected—it could not have been otherwise. To register a loan, the lawful necessity of which cannot be shown, and which the parliament could not have refrained from calling absurd, except by stating that they had not had time to examine and judge of it; to register a progressive loan which offers to the nation an increase of debt to the amount of about five hundred millions; to register a loan which violates every principle of decency and prudence, by exposing the weakness of the throne, without taking any account of the circumstances that may always occur, and the possibility of which must never be lost sight of, such as the rigour of the seasons, the great calamities of nature, or a war by sea and land, unhappily too probable, and not less dreadful than the other scourges; to register such a loan with the sole exchange of a vague promise—would be a thing impossible even to the ministerial party. The loan is rejected; so it ought. What are they going to do?—Good God! What are they going to do?—is asked by the alarmed citizens. And as, for every mind of the least energy, the answer is not doubtful; as the suspension of payments, and soon after, retrenchments in the public debt are inevitable, according to the prime minister’s plan; and as you, the honest man of the administration—you, whom we all consider a good citizen and a personal friend of the King, must not desert the throne and deceive public expectation in this

alarming crisis, I thought it due to your reputation, to the kindness you have shown me, and to the attachment with which this kindness has inspired me, and lastly to myself, as I shall not remain mute amid the desolation of my country, to send you a few brief reflections on the horrible proposal about to be submitted to the council, to endeavour to obtain from it the security which its abetting the measure might produce.

“ ‘Let us suspend our payments,’ ministers say, ‘as they refuse us provisional loans. Let us cut into the debt, since we cannot equalise the receipts and disbursements!’

“ Thus, a Monarch, remarkable for his goodness, would abjure his most sacred engagements, and forget on a sudden that the simple word of a King ought to be worth more than the oath of another man! . . . More than one courtier will doubtless maintain, that this operation must promote the happiness of the sovereign and that of the people. They would be bold enough to talk to his Majesty about public good and justice, when they urged him to realise the wish of Caligula\*.

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\* We have already quoted what, in 1777, Mirabeau said of this monster, and he alludes to him in a writing subsequent to the above letter in the text.

“ When Caligula wished that the Roman people had but one head, that he might have the pleasure of cutting it off, he manifested at once both the aim and the impotency of despotism.”—*Reply to the Alarms of the good Citizens*, p. 42.

For is it not killing two hundred thousand citizens at a single blow, when they are reduced by the same decree, to the execrable alternative of dying from starvation, or living by crime?

“ Thus then, is it to depend upon a government’s will to wreck itself by plague, war, or earthquakes? No! it is repugnant to human nature, to the destiny and the essence of society. For a King to let his subjects starve, or drive them to starvation, which is still more atrocious, is to confess that he is not able to govern them—it is renouncing his right over them. What then would become of so many unfortunate men, excited by the irresistible instinct of self-preservation, and so many annuitants, lenders on security, and creditors inhumanly despoiled of the fruits of their savings, imprudently left without bread by the sudden overthrow of their debtors’ fortunes, and consequently free from all check, from all moral restraint? What terror would be inspired by these unhappy persons, whom all who had nothing to lose would join? Might they not become incendiary enemies of the state, and more especially of the King? Is the fanaticism of misery less ardent than that of property, and are both less inextinguishable than that of religion?

“ That which at least no one will dare to deny is that, in a great kingdom like France, the frightful phantom of bankruptcy should never appear unless pre-



ceded by inexorable necessity. It should first be proved that we are without resources for the present and the future; that we have no means of reviving our credit, or that it would be dangerous to attempt it—all of which is so far from true, that it would be ridiculous to make it matter of discussion. The English support a national debt much greater than ours, spread over a population not half so numerous; and every year they extinguish a portion of it. By what pusillanimity, or rather, by what dishonourable baseness should we give way to despair,—we, to whom nature has been much more bountiful?—we, who might find immense resources by extirpating a host of abuses unknown to our rivals?—we, over whom they have only one advantage, that of having a constitution? Are we not about to have a constitution? Why should we complain of the present low state of public credit, when men's purses are shut with regret, and their owners to open them again, are waiting only for a word from the sovereign, calling upon the nation to examine, consent to, and liquidate the public debt?

“ The crime in preparation, which would make us forfeit the respect of all Europe, where we should no longer be looked upon but as a country without an army, without finances, without honour, and a prey to the first occupant—the crime in preparation is not only absurd, but, fortunately, impossible. It is clear that the holders of public stock would meet as in 1648;

and this new association would be much more imposing than the former, because it would be much more numerous, and because the men of the present day are better informed of their duties than they were at that period. It is evident that the parliaments, having to reproach themselves with the registration of so many taxes, and so many loans, would expiate their past errors and increase their popularity, by authorising the creditors of the state to seize upon the property hypothecated by their contracts. It is evident that the receivers of the King's money would not dare to oppose this, being pressed, from one extremity of the kingdom to the other, by the double authority of public opinion and of the magistrates. . . . That which would infallibly result from an undertaking so barbarous and so dangerous, would be remorse at having begun it, and shame at being compelled to give it up.

“ What then must be done ?

“ Announce in precise and solemn terms the convocation of the States-general in 1789, for you can no longer do without them. In vain would you delay the period : the weight of the debt would not be lightened by it, because the national honour would certainly prevent the States-general from adopting any diminution, that might be planned ; I say diminution,—for to plan anything further would be to conceive the abominable intention of provoking the most

violent of seditions. By an adjournment which the force of circumstances would soon cause to be retracted, independently of any call for it—by a delay which, besides, would leave everything either in stagnation or in anarchy—by a distant date, I say, you would only lose the fruit of so august a declaration. The year in which the King assembles the nation, will be incontestibly the finest of his life. Everybody knows that he has been deceived, and could not help being so; and everybody will do justice to his intentions. Like Louis XII and Henry IV, he will find nothing in this noble act but consolation and praise; and France, regenerated at home, and exalted abroad, will surround its Monarch with the rays of its own glory. Yes!—at the very mention of the States-general in 1789, you will see credit revive, and fill up the loan which the present state of affairs requires. It is true that the parliament has no right to register a loan without the consent of the States-general, because the principal and interest cannot be paid except by taxation,—and the assembled nation has alone a right to vote a tax. Why should we attempt to disguise this, when nobody doubts it any longer? But, seconded by the public suffrage which will, in such a case, allow the parliament to exceed its powers, this body will lend itself to all the means which His Majesty may think proper to employ, even to the convocation of the States; and if, by an impossibility, it refused, the indignation of every good

citizen would prove sufficient to punish it according to its deserts.

“ The two alternatives, one of which the council will soon have to select for the King, are as follows : either a culpable and infinitely dangerous *coup-d'etat*, or an act of beneficence, which is indispensably necessary . . . Can they hesitate between such alternatives ?—can they make the least comparison between the two ?

“ I swear, Sir, on my conscience, and by my Creator, that the following is the calmest, the most moderate, and the most subdued form of what can be said concerning the state of things to which the incapacity of the prime minister has brought us : it is the least sinister portion of what may be prognosticated to the King.—Dishonoured abroad, furious at home, held in derision by others and in horror by ourselves, dangerous only to our rulers,—such shall we become, if the King shows the least intention to fail in his engagements . . . . If this picture could leave without dread those strong-minded men who have led us on to this fatal point,—have they, I would ask, well calculated the convulsions of starvation and the genius of despair ? Who will dare to answer for the consequences as regards the personal safety of those who surround the throne, and even that of the King himself ? . . . . Ah, Sir, say the word, and our intrepid incendiaries will soon knock their pale and livid brows upon the ground ! As for you, not only will your debt be acquitted, but

the respect in which you are held shall increase a hundred-fold, and your strength with it. You well know that the time is past when the favour of a King was sufficient to create the renown of a minister, or his displeasure to crush that minister. Now, true glory is derived from another and a higher source,—in future, the nation alone will raise up political fortunes . . . . Read over and over again, I entreat you in the name of our country, these hastily written lines, which I send you in the strictest confidence. Decide upon what you will do, by your conscience rather than by your wisdom. There are times when courage is prudence, when half-measures are crimes, when silence is dishonourable. Speak then,—say every thing; and if you are not understood, resign, in order that you may not, in office, survive the dishonour of the government, and incur the imputation of having assisted at a deliberation that decreed the disgrace of France. How many blessings, and, sooner or later, how much prosperity, will atone for a day, even doubtful, of anger or disgrace, and how noble will it be to succeed the slayer of his country, and punish or remedy his crime\*.”

Nothing, assuredly, is wanting in this noble defence of the national cause, which seems to us to display Mirabeau's energetic patriotism in a most beautiful light.

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to M. de Montmorin, dated November 20th 1787.

But we also used the word “prophecy,” and we ask if it were possible to foretel with greater precision the acts of a minister equally incapable and immoral, who, on the 16th of August following, suspended the payments of the royal treasury. The effect of this measure was instantaneous: it overthrew the Archbishop of Toulouse.

Meanwhile, however pressing Mirabeau’s arguments, they were not powerful enough to convince M. de Montmorin, an honest, but timid and weak minister. The government still thought it could do without the States-general; it saw no very decided obstacle to its views except in the parliament. This body had acquired great popularity from the faults committed by the government and its strenuous opposition to the ministers. M. de Montmorin was therefore anxious that his bold and clear sighted adviser should embrace the cause of government and write against the parliament. The minister’s request was urgent, and Mirabeau’s very decided refusal is, as we have already observed, so honourable to his memory, and so well establishes his political character, too often calumniated, that we consider ourselves fortunate in being able to give publicity to an authentic document, which nobody has hitherto seen, nor even suspected its existence. It will enable the reader still better to form a just estimate of the sagacity, courage, and wisdom displayed by Mirabeau under such important

circumstances: of his sagacity, for he found in the strength and correctness of his judgment the certain foreknowledge of the impolitic violence \* about to be employed to punish a resistance which could not be either disarmed, overcome, or eluded; of his courage, for courage was necessary to say to the government, you meditate an act either of madness or of dishonesty; of his wisdom, for, had he been listened to, he would have brought the King to see the advantage of taking the lead in a measure which could not be avoided, and thereby acquiring popularity, instead of losing the merit of doing that which he could not prevent, and increasing his danger by the hesitation of the government and the delay of a whole year.

The following is Mirabeau's reply to M. de Montmorin:—

“ I have received with gratitude the enclosure you have kindly sent me of the remonstrances by the Parliament, together with his Majesty's reply. This is a natural and imperious opportunity of explaining myself with regard to the work you request me to write.

“ In the first place, to point out the first difficulty: such a work—and I have well considered the matter—is not of a nature to be either written or published hastily. The principles to be laid down are so delicate

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\* The letter we are about to transcribe is dated a fortnight before the terrible scene of the arrest, in full parliament, of Messrs. d'Esprémenil and Goislard de Monsabert.

and the public so little prepared for them, that they can have no solid foundation but upon facts. Now, research for facts requires time far beyond the period you have indicated. Assuredly, a mere commonplace production, especially by me, could not answer your purpose; the public cause would gain nothing, and I should lose much.

“ And, indeed, without taking into consideration the personal danger I run, by incurring the implacable hatred of those bodies which are not overthrown, and will devour numbers of their enemies before they are—or rather, and to speak more plainly, which will never be overthrown so long as they are attacked without the assistance of the nation—is the very period when the King has not disdained himself to denounce an aristocracy of magistrates, a seasonable moment for having this same aristocracy denounced to France by another? Can any one, at the present time, usefully serve the government by wearing its livery? Is it a proper time to wage war in favour of the administration, when ministers have not feared to make the King deliver a speech with which France will resound, and from which, in sound logic, it is to be inferred that the will of the monarch is good law? Can it be believed, that they who lay down such principles are sincerely willing to assemble, and are preparing to call together the States-general? I have had the honour, Sir, of saying to you, and I have repeated to the keeper of the seals: ‘ I will never wage war with



the parliaments except in the presence of the nation.' There, and there alone, can they be restored and reduced to their original character of simple ministers of justice. But if, in the place of the rights they have usurped from us, we do not see a constitution spring up, sanctioned by our own consent, who, among honest men, would efface the last traces of our dying liberties? If the will of one man is henceforth to become the law in the monarchy, what need have we to meddle with the disputes which arise between the Monarch and the ministers of his will? What have we to lose by such a war?—or rather, why should we not encourage the resistance of the only bodies which have retained means of compromising with this formidable will?

“ Ah! Sir, I have already had the honour to tell you that the government which should render France parliamentary would be very injudicious!—the conduct would be inexplicable which should tend to so dangerous a measure. Could we not, from this time until the meeting of the States-general, virtually do without the parliaments? Why then should we be in a hurry to do without them by law, if it is really meant to assemble the nation? How suspicious would such haste appear? If the nation is deprived of the phantom which it has long considered the guardian of its rights, without calling upon it to watch over the preservation and exercise of these rights, it will not believe that you destroy to build up again, and that

the ambition of these bodies is put down in order to give the kingdom a constitution ; but it will think that you are rushing on to absolute despotism, to the most simple form of arbitrary power. He would be very rash who should reply that, under such circumstances, exaggerated by public mistrust, envenomed by the evil-disposed, there will be no insurrection ; and if one happens, it is not given to human wisdom to calculate the consequences. . . . .

“ If, on the contrary, a system truly national is substituted for the superannuated language of arbitrary authority, all difficulties will vanish of themselves. Do you not see, Sir, that at the very first solemn word that shall indicate the precise period of the meeting of the States-general, all will be quieted ?—that the good citizens and peaceable men—that those Frenchmen who are not yet disgusted with the monarchy because they feel that France is geographically monarchical, will be filled with hope and docility at the very instant this word is uttered ?—that no means whatever will be left for turbulent men, and for the bodies to excite the least trouble, until the National Assembly is formed ?—that if the government requires momentary assistance, and a temporary credit, the readiest mode of obtaining both is to assemble the States-general, because these latter are equally necessary as the only resource left to the finance department, and as the only means of constituting the kingdom, and *vice versâ* ?—that, in a

word, in all this there are no other difficulties than those you have yourselves raised, or which result from that dreadful disease of ministers, never to make up their minds to give to-day that which will be infallibly forced from them to-morrow ? . . . .

“ No, Sir !—the moment for waging a paper war with the parliaments is not yet come. The government is mistrusted, and with too good reason : let it recover the confidence of the nation (and assuredly it can no longer do so, except by calling upon the nation to inquire into its own affairs, and to decree the assistance which they require) ; let it recover the confidence of the nation : on a sudden the parliaments, by the sole force of things, will be reduced to their true standard ; their culpable intrigues will fail ; their mad provocations will receive due punishment. . . . All the strength of these bodies lies in the distress of the government and the discontent of the nation.

“ Such, Sir, is a very concise summary of the reflections dictated to me by a sincere wish to be of use to you, combined with events and the respect I owe to myself. Do not make a zealous servant commit himself, who, when the time comes for him to devote himself to his country, will count the danger as nothing—but who for all the thrones in the world will never prostitute his name in support of an equivocal cause of which the end is uncertain, the principle doubtful, and the progress dark and alarming. Should

I not lose the whole of those feeble talents the influence of which you exaggerate, if I renounced that inflexible independence which alone has given me some success, and which alone can render me useful to my country and my Sovereign? The day on which, under the inspiration of my conscience, strong in my conviction, and as a pure citizen, a faithful subject, and a virgin writer, I join in the *melée*, I shall be able to say— ‘Listen to a man who has never varied in his principles, nor deserted the public cause \*.’”

God forbid that we should add any comment to this noble profession of faith! It is sufficient for us to present it as the programme of Mirabeau’s whole political life. A feeling of pious reserve even forbids our giving it all the effect which we might do; for such is the melancholy nature of the numerous domestic documents before us, that we could easily prove that at the very time Mirabeau declined the lucrative employment offered to him, he was a prey to the privations of real and deep poverty, the sufferings of which were aggravated by a long illness of Madame de Nehra, to whom he paid attentions so assiduous that he fell ill himself, and nearly died.

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\* Unpublished letter from Mirabeau to M. de Montmorin, dated April 18th 1788.

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1. The first part of the document is a list of the names of the persons who were present at the meeting.

2. The second part of the document is a list of the names of the persons who were absent from the meeting.











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